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**Monkey Mountain as a Megazoo: Analyzing the Naturalistic Claims of “Wild Monkey Parks” in Japan**

**ABSTRACT**

In Japan, yuen ko¯en or “wild monkey parks” are popular visitor attractions that show free-ranging monkey troops to the paying public. Unlike zoos, which display nonhuman animals through confinement, monkey parks control the movements of the monkeys through provisioning. The parks project an image of themselves as “natural zoos,” claiming to practice a more authentic form of displaying animals-in-the-wild than that practiced by the zoo. This article critically evaluates the monkey park’s claim by examining park management of the monkeys. The article shows the monkey park’s claim to display wild monkeys to be questionable because of the way that provisioning changes monkey behavior. Against the background of human encroachment onto the forest habitat of the monkey, the long-term effect of provisioning is to sedentarize nomadic monkey animals and to turn the wild monkey park into a megazoo.

Zoos are institutions that claim to display nonhuman animals-in-the-wild to the public. However, one of the main criticisms of the zoo involves the denaturing effect of zoo life on animals in the zoo, arising from the displacement of the animals from their natural habitats. The philosopher Lee (2005) makes
this point, arguing that “morphological reductionism” forms the sub-text of zoo exhibits:

That sub-text appears to say to the visitor that the exotic animal is “wild,” just because—in terms of outward appearance—the animal resembles, on the whole, the individual wild animal (be that animal zebra or lion) out there in the wild. At the same time, it implies that the habitat of which the animal is an integral part is of no significance. (p. 106)

Zoos have responded to this line of criticism by reforming themselves according to the principles of what is known as “environmental enrichment.” The features of the reformed zoo include,

- exposure to fresh air and natural sunlight; a soft substrate, such as dirt and grass, instead of concrete; trees and bushes for climbing, leaning, foraging, nesting, and visual cover; rocks for perching and hiding; and pools of water for swimming, bathing, and drinking. (Maple, McManaman, & Stevens, 1995, p. 223)

The logic here is that in order for zoo animals to “live as healthy and well adjusted representatives of their respective species, we [zoo managers] must provide stimulating environments which mimic natural habitats as closely as possible” (Rice, 1994, p. 597). Proponents argue that the more the zoo environment resembles the natural habitat of the animals in question, the more likely the animals are to display their normal behavior (Chamove, 1989). This has become the yardstick of the modern zoo’s legitimacy. The “good zoo” is one in which visitors “see active animals in a naturalistic habitat behaving much the same as their wild counterpart” (Maple et al. 1995, p. 231).

However, questions remain about the claimed, natural status of these reformed zoos. One interpretation of the new “natural settings” found in zoos is that they should be understood in aesthetic rather than ecological terms, as directed to enhancing the standard of display to the visiting public rather than as reproducing the wild habitat of the zoo animals (Hanson, 2002; Baratay & Hardoiun-Fugier, 2002). In other words, the new zoo designs, in effect, may serve simply to “disguise the confinement that is the primary fact of a zoo” (Wilson, 1992, p. 254). The zoo, after all, remains a very different environment from the natural habitat of the animal in question. Even in the reformed
zoo, there tends to be a huge discrepancy between the home range of the animals in their natural habitat and the space provided for those animals in the zoo. This is especially so for large mammals whose living space in the zoo may well be hundreds—or even thousands—of times smaller than their natural home range (Lee, 2005, pp. 44-46). This issue is particularly important when it comes to the conservation initiatives in which many zoos are engaged. Zoos may be able to conserve wild animals genetically through captive breeding programs, but the zoo environment makes it difficult to conserve these animals behaviorally (Shepherdson, 1994, p. 168).

If zoo captivity denatures wild animals, visitor attractions that show wild animals under open-range rather than captive conditions claim to practice a more authentic kind of wild animal display. One of the best-known forms of open-range animal viewing is the African safari park, which claims to be a natural alternative to the zoo that shows animals in their natural habitat, as opposed to the city zoo in the visitor’s own country (Mullan & Marvin, 1999, pp. 82, 833). Safari park visitors, like visitors to famous tourist attractions more generally, have “the experience, the pleasure and satisfaction of having been there” (Marvin, p. 83). The safari park is different from the zoo in that visitors view the animals “in the animals’ natural habitat and it is this which makes the experience qualitatively different from a zoo experience” (Marvin, p. 81).

This article describes a type of open-range, animal-directed visitor attraction in Japan, known as a “wild monkey park,” which is based on regular provisioning of monkey troops. It is argued that open-range attractions like the monkey park can serve to highlight the reality of animal displacement and captivity at the zoo. Monkey parks appear to achieve the ideal of in situ wild animal display that zoos can only simulate through naturalistic redesign. Yet, upon closer examination, the natural or wild status of the park monkeys itself becomes highly questionable because of the effects of provisioning. It is shown that the combined effect of long-term provisioning and human encroachment onto monkey habitat creates sedentary monkey troops and makes the wild monkey park resemble a megazoo.
Japanese Monkeys Parks

Visiting monkey parks is a popular leisure activity in Japan. Dating back to the 1950s, what are called *yaen ko¯en* (wild monkey parks) are visitor attractions in which troops of Japanese macaques (*Macaca fuscata*) can be viewed by the public under open-range conditions. Also known as *saruyama* or “monkey mountains,” the parks tend to be physically located on mountainsides or in mountain valleys, requiring visitors to ascend the mountain to reach them. Visitors are charged an admission fee to the park to observe the monkey troop gathered in this observation site. The parks are run by local governments, by tourist companies, by transport companies (rail and bus), or by individual entrepreneurs. Some parks are located near existing holiday destinations such as hot-spring resorts, from which they draw many of their visitors. The larger parks attract hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. The most popular park, the Takasakiyama park in Ōita Prefecture, attracts up to 1,000,000 visitors a year (in July 2001, this park recorded its 50 millionth visitor). Many of these visitors are children, such as young children accompanied by parents (occasionally grandparents) and parties of schoolchildren.

The monkey park usually takes the form of a forest-edge clearing where free-ranging troops of Japanese macaques gather on a daily basis. The monkey park is essentially an artificial feeding ground or provisioning site, known as the *esaba*, where regular food handouts (wheat, soya beans, potatoes) are used to lure the monkeys to come and feed in the park where they can be viewed. The opening hours of the park coincide with the appearance of the monkeys at the *esaba*—usually from early in the morning when the monkeys arrive from the mountains to mid- or late afternoon when the monkeys return to the mountains. The park is therefore a human-animal relationship centered on food. The same Japanese word for feed (*esa*) that is used to refer to the food handouts to the monkeys is also used for fishing bait, while the expression *esa de tsuru* or “fishing with bait” is sometimes used to characterize the provisioning of the monkeys in the parks (Kawano, 1979, p. 71; Mito, 1981, p. 209). It would seem to follow that like the angler who uses bait to lure his catch, the monkey park uses food offerings to secure its “catch” of monkeys in the *esaba*. However, the analogy goes only so far. When the monkeys “take the bait,” the result is not capture but rather temporary immo-
bilization in a place where they can be observed. The monkeys are baited for observation rather than capture.

The “Natural Zoo”

The monkey parks generally describe themselves as shizen dobutsuen or “natural zoos.” The term, natural zoo, expresses the key point of difference from the normal zoo: the absence of cages and any obvious physical confinement of the monkeys. This is how Hirose describes the natural zoo concept in relation to the Takasakiyama park (Takasakiyama Natural Zoo):

It is completely different from those places which display animals that are kept and looked after in cages. A “zoo” where they [the animals] come to the feeding station in the morning and then return to the mountains in the evening is something unique. (Hirose, 1992, p. 134)

An alternative English term sometimes used as a translation of yaen kōen is “wild monkey zoo” (Kawai, 1966), which similarly expresses the idea of a zoo without cages. The key characteristic of the monkey park is that it consists of free-roaming monkeys controlled with food rather than confined monkeys enclosed by fences or bars. This method of control serves to optimize the visibility of the monkeys for the paying public.

Hara (1971), the founder of the Jigokudani monkey park, described the wild monkey park as a “yasei e no madoguchi” or “window onto the wild” (p. 172). He used this phrase in the context of describing what he saw as the benefits that the monkey park brings to the visiting public by reconnecting them with nature, but the phrase also neatly captures the basic principle of in situ display that the monkey park claims to practice. The monkey park locates itself at a particular point in (or at least adjacent to) the natural range of the monkeys, serving as a kind of window through which the natural lives of nomadic animals can be glimpsed. Understood in this way, the monkey park is a minimalist institution, which is no more than a vantage point onto wild nature.

This theme of the monkey park as a superior, natural alternative to the zoo often comes up in conversation with park staff. In an interview, a staff member of the Iwatayama park readily drew a contrast with the zoo:
In the zoo there are high fences and you have the feeling that the world on this side and the world on that side are clearly separated. But here there is not that situation and you can get really close to the monkeys and you can even, to an extent, enter among them. This is a place where humans are in the same world as the monkeys and there are only a very few places like that around. I think that the appeal of these places probably has to do with that.

A staff member of the Takasakiyama park describes the contrast with the zoo as follows:

> When you go to zoos you find that they [the animals] are placed in a concrete enclosure where they are exposed to the hot weather and where they look like they are about to collapse of exhaustion or are all sleeping because it is so hot there. When you see places like that, you feel sorry for them. But here the monkeys are really happy as they can still live their lives in the forest. . . . It is the opposite here [to the zoo]. Here people are coming to a place where monkeys are [naturally] present. When you visit a zoo all you see are cages, but here they are not in cages. When they [visitors] come to a place like this they see all sorts of things, such as the ties between [monkey] parents and children. . . . You can see things. This is nature.

Visitor comments indicate that they share this view of the monkey park as a natural zoo. In their oral comments, made as they watch the monkeys in the esaba, visitors often refer to the monkeys as yasei no saru (wild monkeys), as shizen no saru (natural monkeys), and as honi no saru (true monkeys). This same type of language is evident in visitor comment book entries, as in the following from the Jigokudani park:

> This was the first time I have seen wild monkeys. 
> Cheers to this wonderful wild world. And thankyou.
> It was so moving seeing the monkeys living in the heart of nature. I hope they are allowed to continue to live their lives at ease in their wild state.
> Today is my birthday. . . . I’m really glad to be in contact with wild monkeys and with nature.
> As a family, we came to see the lovely spectacle of the wild monkeys.
These comments indicate that many visitors experience the monkey park as a place of authentically wild monkeys and unspoiled nature. Some visitors seem to believe that the park is the natural environment of the monkeys and that they, themselves, have visited “the heart of nature.”

Visitors also tend to view the park in contrast to the zoo. According to a 1971 questionnaire-survey of visitors to the Mino park (Makino, 1976, p. 147), more than three-quarters of visitors supported the view that keeping monkeys in the free-roaming conditions of the monkey park was better than keeping them in the confined conditions of the zoo. During their visits, visitors sometimes point out to each other that the monkeys in the park appear *genki* (lively) in a way that zoo animals do not. Another difference with the zoo that visitors immediately notice is the lack of physical or spatial separation of monkeys and visitors, which usually means that visitors can walk freely among the monkeys. As a common space that humans and monkeys occupy together, the monkey park environment tends to feel like a very different kind of place from the zoo where animals are generally confined and space is rigidly partitioned between the human visitors on one side and the animals on the other.

On the “monkey mountain,” the monkeys seem to be constantly moving around, sometimes slowly and sometimes quickly, following and being followed, chasing and being chased. When most of the troop gathers at feeding time and the true size of the troop becomes apparent, visitors often gasp at the sight. Recalling his visit to the Takasakiyama park, with its large monkey troops, Hirose (1992) observes, “It is a mysterious experience because when they are surrounded by this large monkey troop human beings appear somehow weak and insignificant” (p. 134).

Many parks use such terms as *sarunokuni*—which can be translated variously as “monkey country,” “monkey nation,” and “monkey land.” The notion of “visiting the land of the monkeys” helps to give the visit a certain romantic appeal and heighten visitors’ sense of anticipation and excitement. However, this kind of terminology also has a practical application. It alerts visitors to the need to restrain their behavior in certain ways while in the monkey park; that is, to avoid behavior that upsets the monkeys (staring, touching, talking). As one commentator (Mizuhara, 1971) puts it, “we should expect people who enter ‘monkey country’ to know ‘monkey land’” (p. 238). The point is that, unlike the conventional zoo where the barriers between visitors and
animals prevent direct contact, the absence of barriers in the monkey park brings visitors into direct proximity with the monkeys, a situation that requires visitors to comport themselves in a special way. The representation of the monkey park as the land of the monkeys goes to the heart of the contrast with the zoo. The monkey park does not just claim to be different from the zoo but to be the opposite of the zoo. Animal viewing in the monkey park is premised on humans moving to animal spaces, while animal viewing at the zoo is premised on animals moving to human spaces.

**Provisioning and Aggression**

According to the natural zoo idiom above, the monkey park is a natural alternative to the zoo: a place where wild animals can be viewed directly in their natural setting rather than in a state of captivity. On the face of it, monkey parks appear more credible candidates for natural status than do zoos. Park monkeys are clearly at liberty to roam in a way that zoo animals are not and have not been displaced in the way that zoo animals have. However, even if zoo naturalism is problematic, we should not uncritically accept the naturalistic rhetoric of the monkey park. What follows argues that the monkey mountain is itself a place where these nominally wild monkeys are subject to human control and where their behavior is profoundly modified.

The provision of food and water handouts at fixed sites is one of the foremost means by which free-roaming wildlife is managed for recreational viewing. There are many examples of provisioning in the context of wildlife tourism: (a) elk watching (Boyce, 1989); (b) wild bird watching (Bulbeck, 2005); (c) tiger watching (McDougal, 1980); and (d) dolphin watching (Orams, 1995). Proponents argue that supplemental feeding, because of the close proximity to wild animals that it affords, makes possible a much greater sense of intimacy and contact than is otherwise the case with wildlife tourism (Gill, 2002). Provisioning is a form of animal display that appears to show wild animals in context in a way that the zoo cannot. It enables direct observation of wild animals without seeming to denature them in the way that decontextualized zoo display does.

However, provisioning can have a great effect on the behavior of animals, something that has been widely documented among primates. By concentrating
monkeys around a food source, provisioning intensifies feeding competition and is a source of “social stress” (Lyles & Dobson, 1988, p. 168) associated with “crowding effects” (Paul & Kuester, 1988, p. 219). A study of provisioned chimpanzees and baboons in Gombe found that provisioning led to increased levels of aggression in both species as well as between them (Wrangham, 1974). Studies in India have also found high levels of aggression among provisioned rhesus monkeys: threats, chases and attacks occurred up to six times more frequently during feeding periods than in non-feeding periods (Southwick et al. 1976, p. 12). Similarly, a recent study of bonnet macaques in southern India that compared social interaction during natural foraging with that during provisioned feeding found that provisioning was marked by much higher levels of aggression, which the authors attribute to the “clumped distribution” of the provisioned food compared with natural forage (Ram, Venkatachalam, & Sinha, 2003).

This also appears to be the case with provisioned monkeys in Japan. Aggressive behavior has come to be recognized as a major problem faced by Japanese monkey parks. Observers report high levels of agitation, excitement, and aggression among monkeys in the feeding ground (Iwamoto, 1974; Mori, 1977). One study of a provisioned troop on the island of Kōshima found that there were between 12 and 17 times more aggressive interactions among monkeys in the provisioning site than in the surrounding forest (Mori, 1977). One main reason is the concentration effect that provisioning has on the troop in the esaba feeding station, where the normal pattern of inter-individual spacing is compressed (Imakawa, 1988).

In his Kōshima study, Mori (1977) concludes that “[t]he high frequencies of aggressive interactions . . . were caused by the overcrowding of monkeys in the feeding area” (p. 346). Provisioning, because of its compression effect on the troop, increases the influence of dominance rank on feeding behavior (Furuichi, 1983). Studies of unprovisioned troops have discovered non-agonistic and symmetrical patterns of social behavior that present a stark contrast to the aggressive, hierarchical behavior reported for provisioned troops (Furuichi, 1984). Provisioning affects not only the social behavior of the monkeys in the esaba but also the ranging behavior of the monkeys.
Provisioning and Sedentarization

According to the natural zoo representation of the monkey park, the esaba is just one (artificial) feeding ground among a multiplicity of (natural) others. The artificiality of the esaba becomes insignificant when placed in the context of the nomadic lifestyle of the monkeys, which continues in essentially the same form as before. The park simply creates an additional feeding ground in the form of a clearing in—or at the edge of—the forest where monkeys become hyper-visible, in contrast to their low visibility—or even invisibility—when foraging on the wild foods of the forest. The monkeys are still forest animals who continue to do much of their foraging in the natural feeding grounds of the forest, except that now they routinely emerge from the forest into the esaba clearing where they can be observed by the public during the day.

But do monkey parks really put nomadic monkeys on display? Do they really show wild monkeys in situ? Are they really “windows onto the wild”? As possible evidence for this, the uncertainty of the troops’ appearance in the esaba could be cited. In the early years of their operation, many parks were marked by an erratic pattern of monkey attendance, especially at those times of year—spring and autumn—when natural forage in the forest is bountiful and provides the monkeys with an alternative food source to the food handouts in the esaba. Indeed, during autumn, when monkeys fail to arrive at the esaba on time (or occasionally not at all), park staff tend to combine their apology to disappointed visitors with an explanatory reference to the wild or nomadic status of the monkeys, as though the non-appearance of the monkeys was evidence of their continued wild status. The implication of this is that the park has limited control over the monkeys.

Handouts as a Tool of Control

In practice, however, the parks have much more control over the monkeys than this suggests. Although there continues to be uncertainty over the movements of the monkeys, monkey parks are actually quite successful in keeping this problem within acceptable limits. Food handouts have proved to be a powerful tool of control over the monkeys; for the most part, this succeeds in installing them in their display space on a regular basis. The Jigokudani park provides an illustration of this.
When I visited Jigokudani park in 2005, I was told by Park Director Tokida Eisaku that there are only 5 days a year when the monkeys fail to appear at all and that almost all these days are in the autumn. On most autumn days, the monkeys will arrive at the park, albeit a little later than usual. This may mean that visitors arriving early at the park will be kept waiting for a while; when this happens on a busy day (such as a weekend day), it can be quite embarrassing for the park staff. However, the fact remains that most morning visitors to Jigokudani during the autumn can count on seeing the monkeys within an hour or so.

For the park to be commercially viable as a visitor attraction, the monkeys need to be present for most of the daylight hours. If the esaba were simply one feeding ground among others, as the notion of the natural zoo suggests, the parks would simply not be able to run effectively as commercial visitor attractions. Paying visitors expect to see monkeys, and if there are no monkeys around they will demand their money back. This commercial imperative means that parks are not likely to be content with monkeys appearing for just 2 or 3 hours each day but will require them to be present in the esaba for a minimum of 7 or 8 hours. To achieve this, the park dispenses a large quantity of high quality food. The effect of using food handouts to control monkeys in this way is, according to one common phrase used by park staff, “to nail down” (kugizuke ni suru) the monkeys to the esaba (Kawano, 1979, p. 71).

Control at a Price

However, this high degree of control comes at a price: the nomadic character of the monkeys. Greater control requires that more (and better) food be given to the monkeys. The greater the volume of food handouts and the greater the time spent in the esaba, the more important does the esaba become as a feeding ground. The monkeys still spend part of their lives in the forest; however, for most of the daylight hours, they are in the esaba clearing. They have been habituated to follow a new daily rhythm: spending the day (or most of it) in the esaba clearing and the night in the surrounding forest. The esaba is not just one feeding ground among others, but the supreme feeding ground.

There is now considerable evidence in Japan that provisioning leads to a contraction in the monkey troop’s home range (Takasaki, 1984; Koganezawa &
Imaki, 1999). The Arashiyama troop had a nomadic range of 8 square kilometers in 1954 (prior to provisioning), but this nomadic range had contracted to 0.3 square kilometers by 1974 (Koyama & Nishida, 1977). The "A troop" monkeys of the Minō park had a home range of 450 hectares at the time they were provisioned in 1955, but this decreased to 70 hectares by 1965 and then to 30 hectares by 1975-1976 (Makino, Ano, Sawada, & Nomura, 1977). The Jigokudani monkeys moved in a radius of approximately 1500 meters from the esaba in 1967 (4 years after provisioning began), but this declined to 1000 meters by 1973 and then to 500 meters by the early 1990s (Wada, 1994). Kobashi (1980) points out that among the monkeys of the Inuyama park, as a result of just over a decade of provisioning, “their restplace has steadily become closer, and is now in the forest just above the esaba” (p. 259), requiring them to travel just the shortest of journeys each day to reach the esaba.

Changes in Nomadism

This trend calls into question the much-vaunted nomadic status of the park monkeys. Although, according to the natural zoo vision, park troops are supposed to continue to lead a nomadic way of life, it is clear that they are no longer nomadic in the sense of depending on a multiplicity of feeding grounds and, instead, largely depend on the food handouts at the park. Park monkeys may still be mobile (regularly traversing a wide, unenclosed area of land) rather than captive, but they are no longer mobile feeders in the way they used to be.

Critics point out that the supposed monkey nomadism of parks today has ceased to be true foraging nomadism, in which monkeys routinely move through many different spaces. Instead, it has become akin to commuterism: Monkeys now simply travel between the esaba (during the day) and the forest (at night), in what amounts to a kind of shuttle movement between these two spaces (Masui, 1988, p. 263). Kobashi (1980) makes the same point about the monkeys of the Inuyama park when he likens them to the sarari-iman—the English loanword “salaryman” that has the meaning of salaried employees (p. 259).
Effects of Changes in Habitat

Not only does the “pull” effect of provisioning constrain the nomadic behavior of the monkeys, but there is also a “push” effect related to the inadequacy of monkey habitat in the area surrounding the monkey park. One main cause of this is human encroachment on to monkey habitat. In many cases, the forest space that surrounded the park has been greatly reduced by developmental pressures. Even in the 1950s, many of the wild feeding grounds were under threat from developers. Fifty years on, the pressure of these development forces has become greatly magnified, and the earlier natural feeding grounds do not exist on their former scale. Some of the nut-bearing forest on which the monkeys depended was converted to timber plantations in the 1950s and 1960s, while other parts of it have been removed and replaced by housing estates. The Iwatayama park, situated on the outskirts of the city of Kyoto, is a park that has undergone large scale encroachment. In the mid-1980s, it was estimated that because of housing developments, road construction, and the establishment of cemeteries, the forest area around Iwatayama had declined to around 70 hectares, less than one-seventh of the original forest area in which the troop ranged prior to provisioning (Asaba, 1984). One expression of this territorial constriction is that the nighttime resting place of the park monkeys in the mountains, which was formerly far away from human settlements, is now actually visible from one of the new housing developments (Asaba).

The other factor affecting natural habitat is the increasing size of the provisioned monkey troop. Provisioning tends to multiply monkey numbers:

1. On Kōshima, the 21 monkeys in 1954 increased sixfold to 130 by 1971 (Watanabe, 1989);
2. In Tenshōzan, the 35 monkeys in 1956 nearly tripled to 90 monkeys by 1974 (Fukuda, Tanaka, & Muramatsu, 1974);
3. In Iwatayama, the 28 monkeys in 1954 increased tenfold to reach 301 by 1972 (Koyama, Norikoshi, & Mano, 1975);
4. In Jigokudani, the 23 monkeys in 1963 increased to 383 monkeys by 1995 (Wada, 1998); and
5. In Takasakiyama, the 220 monkeys in 1953 increased ninefold to 2,030 monkeys by 2003.
This scale of population increase tends to have an adverse effect on the vegetation in, and around, the esaba and in the forest beyond. Many of the forest trees around the esaba become disfigured or wilt due to the pressure of monkey numbers, while young trees cannot grow to any size to replace these older trees. Moreover, the daily movement of thousands of monkeys through the forest eventually compacts and hardens the soil on the forest floor (Sugiyama, 1999, Wada, 1998). In Takasakiyama, the surrounding forest cannot support such high numbers of monkeys. One survey of the Lucidophyllous vegetation on the mountain calculated that, in the absence of provisioning, the monkey-carrying capacity of the 3-kilometer area of forest there would be less than 200 monkeys (Sugiyama, 1999). This means that the actual monkey population of more than 2000 is more than 10 times the carrying capacity of the forest vegetation.

The monkey park formula depends on maintaining the nomadic status of the monkeys—that is, on the continued existence of monkey habitat of sufficient quantity and quality to enable the monkey troop to obtain a good proportion of food intake from wild sources. However, this habitat is under considerable threat: both from human encroachment and from the monkey localization effects of the monkey parks. Increasingly deprived of their old forest feeding grounds, the monkeys become even more dependent on the food handouts at the esaba. What this means is that over time the nomadic character of park monkey populations inevitably wanes.

Under conditions of encroachment, the relationship between the parks and the monkeys changes. When provisioning began in the 1950s and 1960s, parks generally concerned themselves with luring the monkeys out of the forest to the esaba, where they could be viewed by the public. The park was happy as long as the monkeys appeared in the esaba for the park’s opening hours; outside of these hours, in the morning and evening, the monkeys were in the forest and of little concern. However, today the situation is different. Because of the developmental encroachment upon the monkey’s habitat, there is a much greater likelihood, when monkeys are away from the esaba, that they will encounter human space such as residential housing and farmland. Because of this, park managers must now concern themselves with the monkeys not only while they are at the esaba but also while they are away from it. Park staff are now faced with an expanded management role that
includes overseeing the monkeys’ ranging behavior. Concern over crop-raiding is especially strong, as this can lead to demands for compensation from irate farmers and even to calls for closure of the park. For their part, parks intervene much more in the troop by capturing and culling crop-raiding individuals.

Encroachment is reported for other unenclosed, animal-directed, visitor attractions around the world. Although safari parks and wildlife reserves have presented themselves as superior alternatives to zoos, there is a definite trend for such places to become enclosed—either through de facto “insularization” due to human pressure on adjacent land or through the actual fencing off of the park (Conway, 1995, pp. 5-6; Younghusband & Myers, 1986, p. 10). Kruger National Park in South Africa has become “a huge island in a sea of people and farms” and “the most intensively managed wildlife reserve in the world” (Younghusband & Myers, p. 6). This enclosure trend means that the wildlife park can no longer define itself in clear contrast to the zoo. As Conway has observed: In practice, “many parks and reserves are becoming megazoo” (p. 6). In a world of increasing human population pressure on wildlife habitats, the future of open-range animal visitor attractions is a highly uncertain one.

**Conclusion**

There has been much criticism of the practice of captivity-based wild animal display associated with the zoo on the grounds that the nominally wild animals of the zoo are in fact denatured. Open-range animal attractions, on the other hand, typically represent themselves as natural alternatives to the zoo. In practice they too tend to entail some degree of human intervention in, and control over, the lives of the animals in question. However, the fact of human intervention should not, of itself, disprove the natural or wild status of the animals in question; what matters is the empirical question of whether—or to what extent—animal behavior is modified.

In this article, we have seen that wild monkey parks in Japan are faced with a similar situation. Monkey parks define themselves as natural zoos in contrast to conventional zoos and give their visitors the impression that their monkeys are naturally free and the opposite of the artificially confined animals
of the zoo. The parks represent provisioning as a form of human intervention in the lives of the monkeys that does not alter their basic nomadic character. When examined closely, however, it is clear that the provisioning-based management of the parks does have a profound effect on monkey behavior. The monkey troops are subject to wider encroachment effects that call into question the nomadic status of the monkeys. Although not to the same extent as zoos, monkey parks also displace their animals in the process of displaying them to the public. Troop range diminishes, the troop spends long periods of time in the *esaba* (which becomes its predominant feeding ground rather than simply one feeding ground among others), and in many cases the troop comes to rest overnight within a short distance of the *esaba*. The monkeys continue to be mobile, but they cease to be mobile foragers in the way they were prior to provisioning.

With this sedentarization of the park monkeys, the difference between monkey parks and zoos diminishes. Although the monkeys are still free-ranging in the sense of being non-confined, they are no longer free-ranging in the sense of maintaining their original nomadic lifestyle. The nomadic status of park monkeys becomes compromised, and the claimed polar contrast between the nomadic animals of the monkey park and the confined animals of the zoo no longer stands. Just as the wild animals in the zoo eventually become zoo animals (animals habituated to the conditions of the zoo), the wild monkeys of the park eventually become park monkeys (monkeys habituated to the conditions of the park). Japanese “monkey mountains” may represent themselves as natural zoos, but they might be better described as megazoos.

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**Note**

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