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## BILLY THE CHIMP ON 'CHELSEA LATELY'

November 29, 2013 · by Jonathan Silver · in Endangered Chimpanzees



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Chelsea Handler featured Billy the Chimpanzee on her show, *Chelsea Lately*, last week. Being a comedy show, the chimp was brought on stage to get some laughs from the audience. Since chimps are so similar to humans, spectators might have thought that a smiling chimp dressed up in human clothes was funny, but nothing about that segment was funny. (Though Billy appears to be smiling in the segment, he is in fact showing his teeth because he is in distress – this is known as a “fear grin”).

There are two major problems with having chimps like Billy in the entertainment business.

**First**, studies show that chimps in the media tend to give viewers the impression that their populations are not endangered. It is endangering to a critically endangered species to think that species is not endangered. So Handler’s show harmed efforts to protect chimps in the wild.

**Second**, chimps in entertainment are often [treated horribly](#). While chimps in the wild grow up dependent upon their mothers until age eight or so, chimps in entertainment are separated from their mothers at birth, which means they never learn how to behave like chimps—they develop abnormal behaviour. As these chimps grow older, they become more intelligent and stronger and thus their abnormal behaviour becomes more [difficult to control](#). Some trainers control disobedient chimps with a shock collar underneath their clothes.

I am happy to see the mass of viewers that posted their disapproval on [Handler's Facebook page](#) and petitioned her to cancel Billy's future appearances on her show. That Handler's mistake is not going unnoticed is encouraging. I am hopeful that this event will deter others from using chimps for entertainment in the future. Getting chimps out of the entertainment business would be a huge step towards their protection.

Though this event seems to be fading from public attention, it isn't over. It isn't too late to post how you feel on [Handler's Facebook page](#) or Twitter, or to sign the Jane Goodall Institute's petition [here](#).

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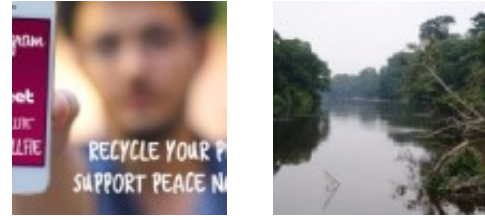
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