

Wild animals at UK homes include lions, zebras and crocodiles

23 May 2016 | UK



More than 300 cobras, vipers and rattlesnakes are being kept in UK homes

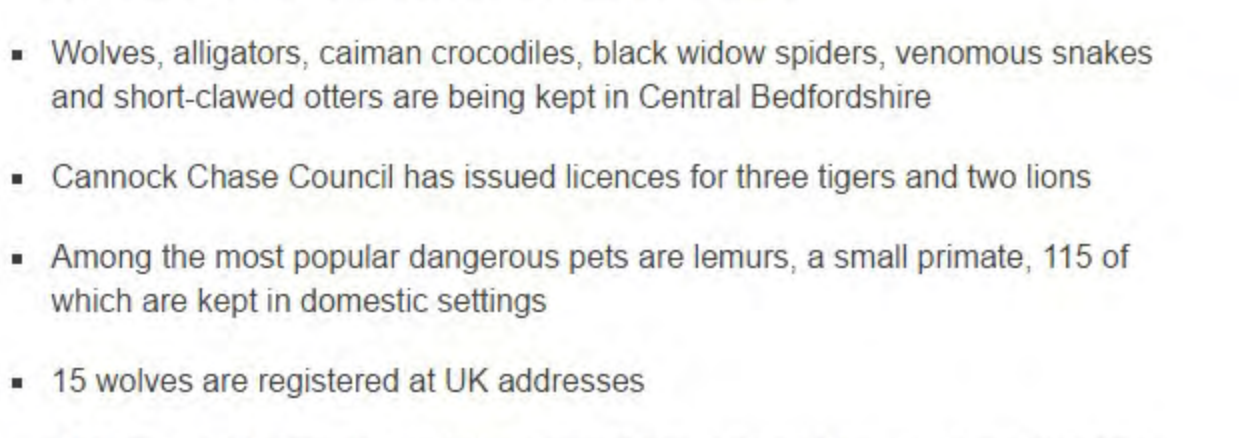
Wild animals including lions, tigers, crocodiles, rattlesnakes and zebras are being kept legally on private property across the UK, figures have revealed.

More than 100 councils have issued licences to people who keep undomesticated animals at home, a freedom of information request by the Press Association news agency found.

It also showed more than 300 cobras, vipers and rattlesnakes are being kept.

Animal welfare experts have expressed concern at the findings.

Animals in the UK



The FOI found:

- Licences for pumas, lynxes, ocelots, lemurs, vipers, ostriches and an assortment of wild cats have been issued in Cornwall
- Wolves, alligators, caiman crocodiles, black widow spiders, venomous snakes and short-clawed otters are being kept in Central Bedfordshire
- Cannock Chase Council has issued licences for three tigers and two lions
- Among the most popular dangerous pets are lemurs, a small primate, 115 of which are kept in domestic settings
- 15 wolves are registered at UK addresses
- 412 bison and more than 2,000 wild boar live in private fields in the UK, along with a score of zebras

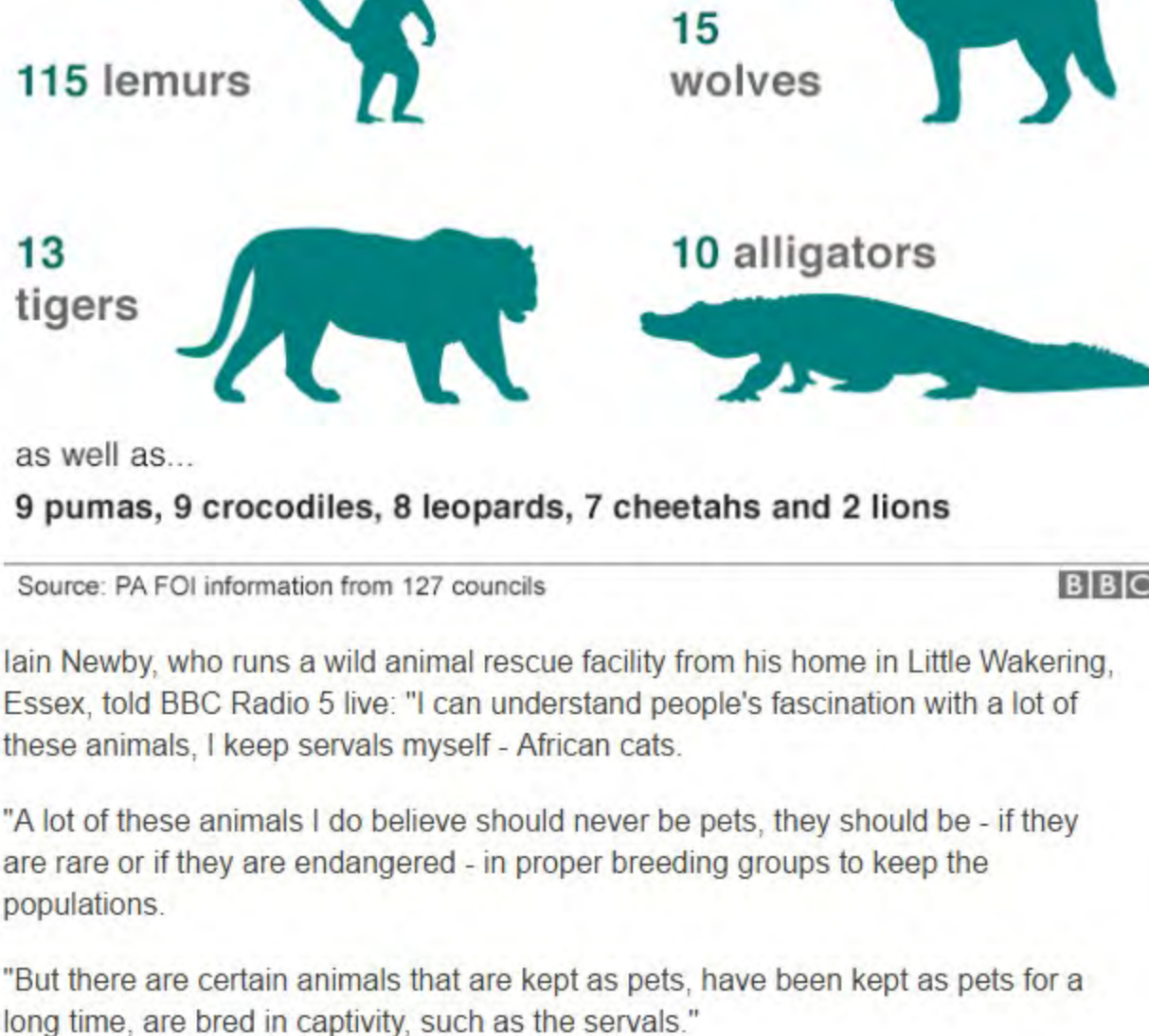
Dangerous wild animals licences are required to keep **animals that are considered to be wild, dangerous or exotic**.

These are granted by councils, provided requisite safety measures at the owner's home are met and a fee is paid.

Licences are also issued to properties where animals may be receiving care after being rescued, or living at small private farms, where people keep wild beasts for breeding purposes.

Dangerous wild animal licences

Animals being kept in private properties across the UK include:



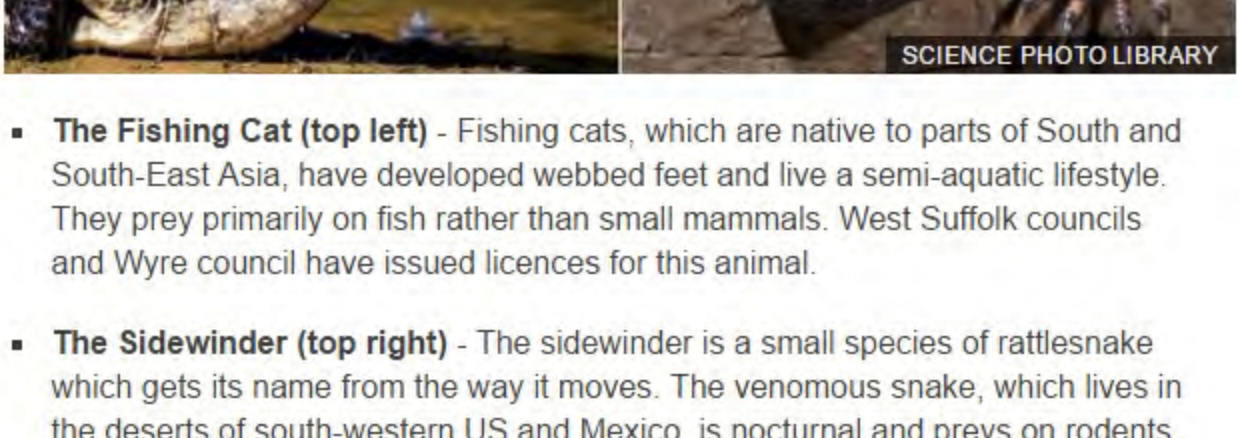
Source: PA FOI information from 127 councils

Iain Newby, who runs a wild animal rescue facility from his home in Little Wakering, Essex, told BBC Radio 5 live: "I can understand people's fascination with a lot of these animals, I keep servals myself - African cats.

"A lot of these animals I do believe should never be pets, they should be - if they are rare or if they are endangered - in proper breeding groups to keep the populations.

"But there are certain animals that are kept as pets, they have been kept as pets for a long time, are bred in captivity, such as the servals."

There once was a sidewinder from Swale...



- The Fishing Cat (top left)** - Fishing cats, which are native to parts of South and South-East Asia, have developed webbed feet and live a semi-aquatic lifestyle. They prey primarily on fish rather than small mammals. West Suffolk councils and Wyre council have issued licences for this animal.

- The Sidewinder (top right)** - The sidewinder is a small species of rattlesnake which gets its name from the way it moves. The venomous snake, can grow to 15ft (4.5m) in the deserts of south-western US and Mexico, is nocturnal and preys on rodents, lizards and small birds. It can be found at homes in Bolsover, Broxtowe, Swale and Central Bedfordshire.

- Gila Monsters (bottom right)** - The gila monster is a venomous lizard native to the US - or at homes in Central Bedfordshire, North Kesteven, North Lanarkshire, Stevenage, Walsall and Winchester councils, and Northern Ireland.

- Caiman Crocodile (bottom left)** - Caiman crocodiles, which are small crocodilians found in Central and South America, can grow to 15ft (4.5m) The BBC spoke to **the owner of a caiman called Caesar in 2013**. There are UK owners in North Lanarkshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Central Bedfordshire and West Dorset.



- Wild Ass (top left)** - The African wild ass is listed as "critically endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the Asiatic wild ass is "near threatened". North Somerset Council has issued a licence for a Somali wild ass.

- Black Mamba (top right)** - The predator, which uses neurotoxins to paralyse and kill small animals, is one of the fastest and most dangerous snakes in Africa. UK owners can be found in the Vale of White Horse and in Sefton.

- Przewalski's Horse (bottom right)** - The wild horse is listed as "endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. They had been listed as extinct in the wild in 1996, **but can now be found in north-west China**. There is a UK owner in North Somerset.

- Camels (bottom left)** - Several councils have issued licences for camels, but Scarborough and Stafford have the highest number at six each.

The figures supplied by the councils only collate details of animals being kept legally with a licence, but not any that are being kept without the proper authorisation.

Mr Newby said that although the FOI revealed more than 300 venomous snakes were being kept across the country, he said he knew "four or five different people that have more than 300 venomous snakes themselves".

He said some people keep them because they have rescued them and are in a position to look after them properly, while others keep them to help hospitals with anti-venom work.



Iain Newby, pictured with one of his serval cats, said he could understand the fascination with a lot of the animals that need licences

An RSPCA spokeswoman said the charity was "deeply concerned" about the figures.

"People may buy them with little idea of how difficult they can be to keep and the animals are sometimes neglected when the novelty wears off and the commitment hits home.

"This is why we would encourage anyone thinking of getting an exotic pet to find out as much as possible about the animal's needs and whether they're a realistic pet."

The FOI request was sent to every council in the UK, of which 363 replied.

In Northern Ireland, the Environment Agency provided the figures for the whole country.

Do you keep wild animals at your home? Share your stories and pictures with us. Email haveyoursay@bbc.co.uk.

Please include a contact number if you are willing to speak to a BBC journalist. You can also contact us in the following ways:

- WhatsApp: **+44 7525 900971**
- Send pictures/video to yourpics@bbc.co.uk
- Upload your pictures / video here**
- Tweet: [@BBC_HaveYourSay](https://twitter.com/BBC_HaveYourSay)
- Send an SMS or MMS to **61124** or **+44 7624 800 100**

Or use the form below

Name

Your E-mail address **(required)**

Town & Country

Your telephone number

Comments **(required)**

Terms and conditions

Send

Related Topics

[Animals](#)

Share this story

About sharing

[Email](#) [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#)

[Print](#)

More on this story

What are the world's deadliest animals?

18 May 2016

The beautiful creatures with a deadly streak

21 July 2015

Exotic pet rules to be reviewed by Scottish government

15 February 2015

Man shares his bungalow with crocodile called Caesar

3 October 2013

Rare Przewalski horses return to their native habitat

14 June 2013

Exotic pets: Why do Americans keep dangerous animals?

28 October 2011

Exotic pets 'can endanger' UK wildlife

23 October 2011

Why wild animals do not make good pets

20 October 2011

UK >



Street dog fighting crackdown urged

24 May 2016 | UK



Landmark tracking operation approved

23 May 2016 | York & North Yorkshire



McCartney 'was depressed after Beatles'

24 May 2016 | Entertainment & Arts

More Videos from the BBC

Recommended by Outbrain



A car is swallowed by a large hole in the street in south London.



Drone films basking sharks in Calisio Bay in County Waterford



Australian man fights off crocodiles



Julia Roberts: Pretty Woman wouldn't get made today



Comparing the British army's new body armour with the old



Judo star Stephanie Inglis's sister: 'We just want her home'

Elsewhere on BBC

Recommended by Outbrain



West End Festival: £50,000 needed for Byres Road parade



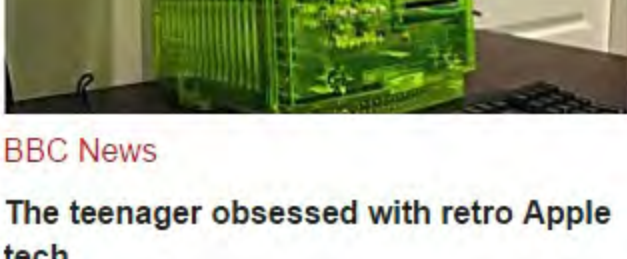
The sleepwalker of New York



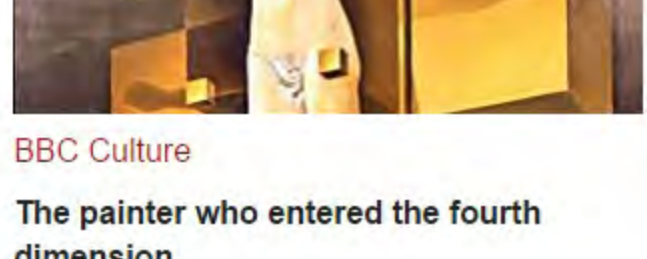
The teenager obsessed with retro Apple tech



The painter who entered the fourth dimension



Hillary Clinton says race against Bernie Sanders is 'done'



Toni Erdmann is the most surprising comedy at Cannes

Top Stories

Greece starts to move Idomeni migrants

Greece has begun evacuating thousands of migrants from the makeshift Idomeni camp on its northern border with Macedonia.

1 hour ago

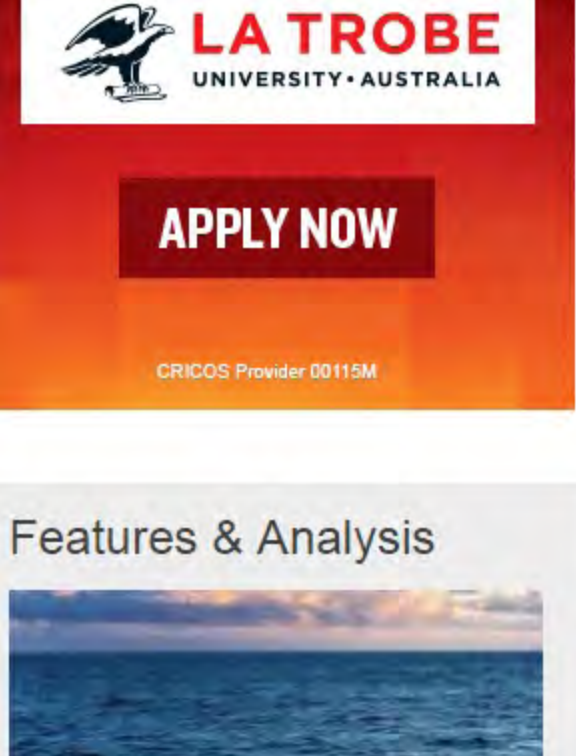
EgyptAir flight 'did not swerve'

5 hours ago

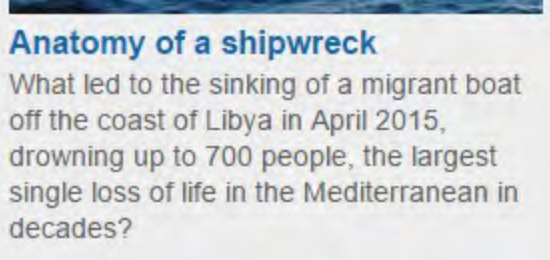
Six things about the \$6 meal

45 minutes ago

ADVERTISEMENT

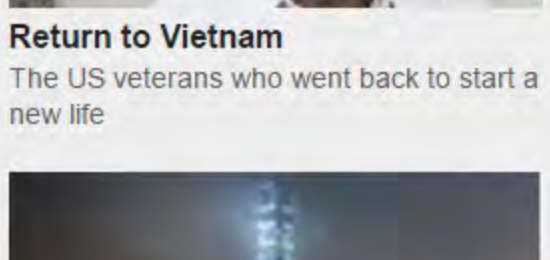


Features & Analysis



Anatomy of a shipwreck

What led to the sinking of a migrant boat off the coast of Libya in April 2015, drowning up to 700 people, the largest single loss of life in the Mediterranean in decades?



Return to Vietnam

The US veterans who went back to start a new life



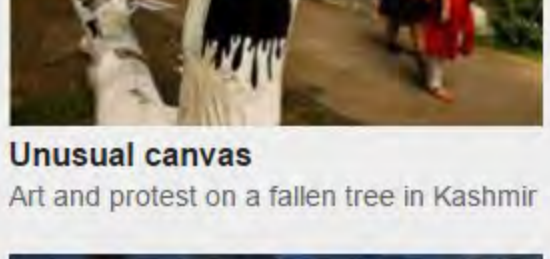
'Disrespectful' art?

Why a light display in Hong Kong was cancelled



Motorbike tales

The start-up aiming to beat the traffic in Indonesia



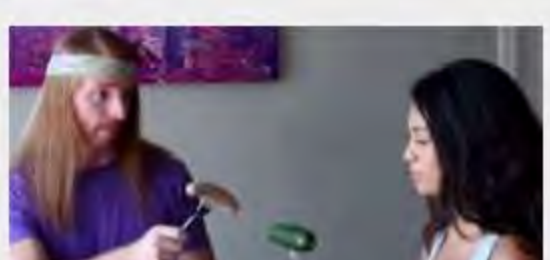
Unusual canvas

Art and protest on a fallen tree in Kashmir



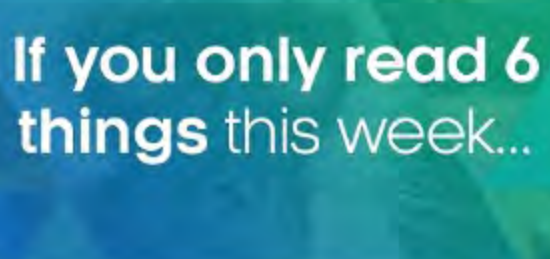
Slum Mama

How the portrayal of a drug-dealing mother won at Cannes



Death of a trailblazer

Why was Bangladesh's first female journalist?



Sanctimonious vegans

Is there any truth in the stereotype?

If you only read 6 things this week...

Subscribe today

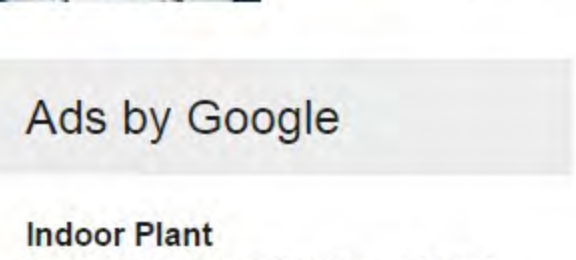
6 can't miss stories in your inbox every Friday

Most Popular

Read	Watched	
EgyptAir flight 'did not swerve'		1
Bourdain and Obama: Six things about the \$6 meal		2
Greece starts to move Idomeni migrants		3
Leaked tape forces Brazil minister out		4
PM says £1,500 used car 'for wife'		5
McCartney 'was depressed after Beatles'		6
Unity call after divisive Austria poll		7
Can vegans push themselves to physical extremes?		8
Sugar shortage hits Coke in Venezuela		9
Why is Bulgaria making a big fuss about the niqab?		10

From Around the Web

Promoted content by Outbrain



Ads by Google

Indoor Plant
Garden Tips, Shop Retailers & More!
Download GardeningEnthusiast - Free
www.gardeningenthusiast.com

Ball Valve Manufacturer
Top China Ball Valve Manufacturer,
Ce Iso Ts Certification, Cheap Price
www.aksvalves.com

Free IT Training
Improve Your Computer Skills, Sign Up
Now For Free Online Courses
free-online-training-courses.com

BBC News Services

[On your mobile](#) [On your connected tv](#) [Get news alerts](#) [Contact BBC News](#)

Explore the BBC

News	Sport	Weather	Shop	Earth	Travel
Capital	Culture	Autos	Future	TV	Bitesize
CBBC	Cbeebies	Food	iWonder	Radio	Music
Arts	Make It Digital	Taster	Nature	Local	

Terms of Use About the BBC Privacy Policy Cookies Accessibility Help Parental Guidance Contact the BBC Advertise with us Ad choices

Copyright © 2016 BBC. The BBC is not responsible for the content of external sites. Read about our approach to external linking.