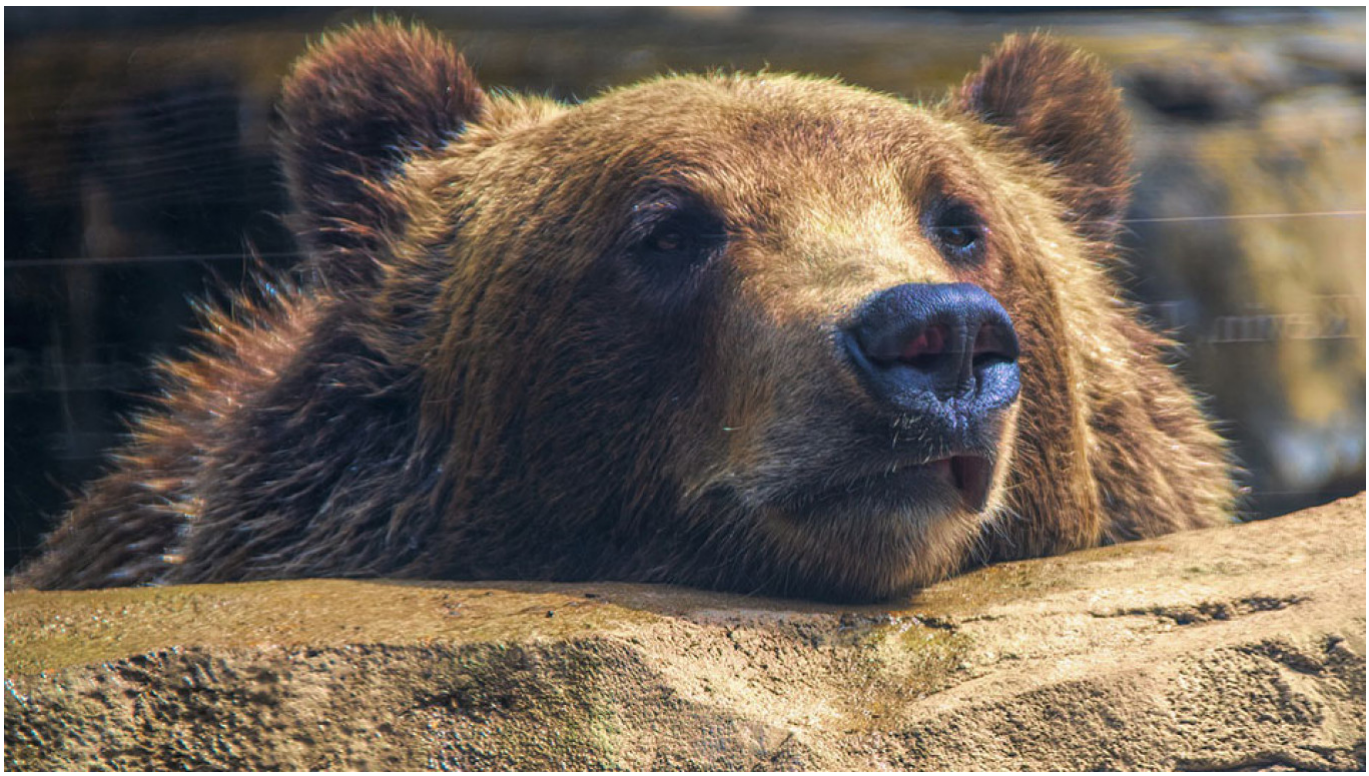
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Crimean Zoo Owner Asks Public to Adopt 30 Bears – Or He'll Kill Them

November 15, 2019



Pixabay

A well-known zoo and safari park owner in Russian-annexed Crimea has announced he is giving away more than 30 bears from one of his parks — otherwise he'll be forced to euthanize them.

Oleg Zubkov owns the Taigan lion park 46 kilometers west of Simferopol, where bears taken from circuses and private zoos live alongside more than 2,500 lions, tigers and other species of large animals. After veterinary authorities found violations in the park and asked the court to recommend the zoo close for three months, he says he can no longer afford to care for the bears.

Embed:

If no zoos or shelters are able to take the bears in, he will have no choice but to euthanize or shoot them, he said in a video on his YouTube channel.

“I’m disgusted with this decision and I’m very sorry because I’ve been collecting and saving these species for a long time,” the businessman told The Moscow Times on Friday.

According to Zubkov, who has been running his parks since 1995, Crimean authorities have been pressuring him ever since Russia annexed the peninsula from Ukraine in 2014. He says he has attended more than 300 court hearings related to fines and charges against him.

Because his parks receive no state subsidies, Zubkov says the Taigan park will be forced to close if it is unable to bring in money from admission tickets. Previously, he has had to feed dozens of Vietnamese pigs to the lions and tigers at his park to cut costs.

If things don't improve, his lions and tigers will be next in line.

“Bears are just the first stage,” he said. “Eventually, there will be a sale of the rest of my [lion and tiger] collection.”

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The head of the Crimean State Veterinary Committee told Interfax that he had not received "any documents about Zubkov’s killing of animals."

A controversial 2018 animal biting incident at the Taigan park prompted scrutiny from Crimean authorities. A lion bit a 46-year-old tourist’s hand while she was taking a photo with it. According to Zubkov, it was the only incident to happen at one of his parks in seven years.

Zubkov’s other park, the “Fairytale” zoo in Yalta, has also seen a significant increase in the number of complaints filed over inappropriate keeping of animals, according to the Belogorsk district veterinary committee, with 383 complaints in April 2019.

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