

Bear's behavior sets off call for boycott of zoos

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NEW YORK — The Gus fuss has spawned its first protest.

Kathy Guillermo, of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, went to New York's Central Park — home of Gus the neurotic polar bear — to spotlight what she called the cruel treatment of animals in zoos.

Gus, the Central Park zoo's star attraction, swims in repeated patterns, a sign of stress, and is now under the care of an animal specialist who is evaluating his behavior.

Guillermo said Gus' behavior indicates "zoochosis," a mental illness in animals caused by the stress of captivity. "It may be too late for Gus to be rehabilitated, but we must not enslave animals anymore," she said.

Calling for a boycott of all zoos, she suggests that cap-

turing animals sends the wrong message to children. "We are telling them that it's OK to go into someone's home, capture them and enslave them in a small structure for life," said Guillermo, who says her 5-year-old daughter has never seen a zoo.

Zoo officials beg to differ.

"The interest generated by Gus goes to show that zoos are a joy and educationally stimulating. Where else does a child growing up in the city get to see the wild habitat?" said Allison Power, a spokeswoman for the Central Park Wildlife Center.

Power said that Gus is exhibiting a pattern similar to animals in other zoos. "It could be boredom or excess energy. But we've come a long way from zoos that are made of cages and concrete," she said.