

Federal Rescue Operation Brings Eight Trafficked Monkeys to Sanctuary Care

This Thanksgiving, Eight Monkeys Find Safety & Healing After Dark Web Trafficking: Jungle Friends Celebrates Their Journey "Out of the Dark and Into the Light"

GAINESVILLE, FL, UNITED STATES, December 1, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- This Thanksgiving season, Jungle Friends Primate Sanctuary is celebrating something extraordinary: eight rescued monkeys who have gone from fear, neglect, and illegal trafficking on the Dark Web to safety, nutritious food, and large naturalistic habitats with access to climate-controlled indoor bedrooms with blankets and toys.

On March 31, 2025, our dedicated volunteers, along with two other rescue organizations, assisted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in a rescue operation that led to eight neglected monkeys being safely relocated to Jungle Friends, following one of the largest federal primate-trafficking investigations in recent years. This rescue — now known as "Out of the Dark and Into the Light" — included:

- Emily – Spider monkey removed from a small bird cage

“

These monkeys have known neglect and deprivation. Now they know kindness. This Thanksgiving, they are surrounded by love.”

Kari Bagnall, President and Executive Director

- Lyn & Beth – Young traumatized capuchins
- Paul – Elderly capuchin needing special care
- Pattycake & Calla – Marmosets rescued from filthy conditions
- Stephanie & Elsa – Tamarins, cotton-top tamarins are critically endangered

Today, these eight survivors are finally safe — and giving thanks in their own way. “This Thanksgiving, these monkeys are celebrating something many never get: a



Rescued Spider and Capuchins

second chance,” said Kari Bagnall, Founder and President of Jungle Friends Primate Sanctuary. “They’ve endured so much neglect, but now they have the chance to heal and live an almost wild life, with other monkeys — doing monkey things!”

Part of a Growing Crisis: Dark Web Primate Trafficking
Their rescue is tied to an intensifying national crisis: primates being illegally bred and sold through underground online networks and illegal trafficking rings. In this multistate operation, authorities seized dozens of animals — monkeys, lemurs, wallabies, deer, and more. Many did not survive. Although none were in critical condition, many required extended quarantine due to gastroenteritis.



Rescued Marmosets and Tamarins

Jungle Friends has stepped in repeatedly to help federal agencies with primate confiscations, including the eight new residents who are now learning how to feel safe again.

The “Monkey Whisperer” Case: National Attention and Ongoing Sentencing

This rescue is connected to the broader investigation involving exotic animal breeder Jimmy Wayne Hammonds, known as “The Monkey Whisperer,” whose illegal sales and trafficking activities spanned multiple states.

The case gained national attention following Hammonds’ sale of a capuchin monkey to entertainer Chris Brown — a violation of federal wildlife law that resulted in Hammonds’ March 2022 guilty plea, followed by:

- Five years probation
- Over \$90,000 in fines
- A continued federal investigation
- A new indictment (Nov 15, 2024) including conspiracy and Lacey Act violations

His sentencing on the new charges is scheduled for January 21, 2026, in Tampa, Florida. This case was widely reported by: The New York Times, Miami Herald, AP News, Billboard (Bill Donahue), CBS News, NBC News (Wilson Wong), and PETA. Their coverage has brought national recognition to the cruelty of the illegal primate trade.

What the Monkeys Are Thankful for This Season

1. Safety
2. Nourishment
3. Compassionate Care

4. A Future

"These monkeys have known neglect and deprivation," said Bagnall. "Now they know kindness. This Thanksgiving, they are surrounded by love."

Nearly 30 Years of Rescue and Rehabilitation

Since 1997, Jungle Friends Primate Sanctuary has provided lifetime care to nearly 200 New World monkeys rescued from research labs, illegal trade, roadside zoos, the pet industry, and now the Dark Web. With species-appropriate habitats, expert caregivers, and decades of trauma-recovery experience, Jungle Friends is uniquely equipped to care for vulnerable and confiscated primates.

For More Information, Visit These Links:

www.JungleFriends.org

<https://junglefriends.org/out-of-the-dark/>

Watch our Almost Wild video:

<https://www.youtube.com/@JungleFriends>

About Jungle Friends Primate Sanctuary

Saving Monkeys ~ Promoting Compassion

Since 1997, Jungle Friends Primate Sanctuary has offered safety, healing, and lifelong care to hundreds of New World monkeys rescued from research laboratories, the pet trade, and illegal trafficking. As one of the nation's leading primate sanctuaries, Jungle Friends is dedicated to trauma recovery, natural social bonding, and giving every monkey a life filled with dignity, choice, and compassion.

Guided by Ahimsa — dynamic harmlessness, our mission extends beyond sanctuary walls. Jungle Friends actively advocates for stronger primate protection, public education, and compassionate living, working to end the exploitation of all animals.

Kari Bagnall

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