**About the NhRP**

Founded in 1995 by attorney Steven M. Wise, the Nonhuman Rights Project (NhRP) is the only civil rights organization in the US dedicated solely to securing rights for nonhuman animals. We use the term “nonhuman rights” to remind people that human beings are also animals—the only animals with legally recognized and enforceable rights.

The NhRP’s litigation and legislation are the first of their kind in the world. Our persistence and bold approach are already changing the legal status quo and have catalyzed a global conversation about how our legal systems view and treat nonhuman animals. As a result of the NhRP’s unique mission and work, courts and legislatures are beginning to recognize the systemic problem of animals’ rightlessness, the suffering it has caused, and the ways it undermines the values and principles of justice on which our own human rights depend.

Our current clients are chimpanzees and elephants. Our other potential clients include orangutans, bonobos, gorillas, dolphins, and whales. They are members of species for whom there is robust, abundant scientific evidence of self-awareness and autonomy. Self-awareness is the capacity to recognize yourself as an individual separate from the environment and other individuals. Autonomy is the capacity to make choices about how to spend your days and live your life. We seek recognition of our clients’ right to liberty under the common law of habeas corpus, followed by their release to sanctuaries where this right will be respected.

We closely follow the science of who nonhuman animals are because science creates an unshakable foundation for the arguments we make in courts and legislatures. Ethologists and other experts’ rigorous, often long-term studies of the cognitive, emotional, and social complexities of great apes, elephants, dolphins, and whales make clear exactly why it’s wrong to imprison and exploit these nonhuman beings, especially alone and in environments radically unlike their natural habitats.

In conjunction with scientific evidence, human experience also matters deeply to what we do. What we know about nonhuman animals from observing and interacting with them in our everyday lives—and the conversations we have in turn—can help change and enrich larger cultural conversations about how we view and treat members of other species, making it more likely we will collectively change the legal status quo.

As an organization, we’re committed to working within our existing legal systems and pursuing the strategies we deem most likely to succeed in courts and legislatures based on the values and principles courts and legislatures say they believe in, such as liberty, equality, and fairness. Great apes, elephants, dolphins, and whales are not the only animals who are suffering. But they are the species we consider most likely to be the first to break through the legal wall that separates all nonhuman animals from all human beings.

The fight for nonhuman rights focuses on the fact that nonhuman animals have their own inherent interests, just as humans do, and calls for these interests to be protected. All of human history shows that the only way to truly protect human beings’ fundamental interests is to recognize their rights. It’s no different for nonhuman animals.

Because nonhuman rights are based on the same values and principles of justice that protect human beings from unjust imprisonment and exploitation, recognition of nonhuman rights only strengthens the foundation for human rights. If we truly believe in values and principles like liberty and equality, we should and must extend them to at least some nonhuman animals.