

Soda geyser trend becomes sinister as people target animals for YouTube content

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Credit: Ivan Samkov from Pexels

YouTube has become a —source of [livelihood for millions of people around the world](#). Content producers regularly upload different types of content, including nature and wildlife videos. These videos can be quite

popular, but some of them involve animal abuse, making them both ethically and environmentally problematic.

In recent years, some creators have been uploading so-called fishing and hunting "experiments." In these, people try to catch different animals using different abusive means involving large quantities of soda, Mentos and other products.

Geyser videos have always been [very popular on YouTube](#). They involve documenting what happens when mint candy (often Mentos) is mixed with a carbonated beverage, resulting in a rapid eruption of the soda out of the bottle that can shoot up to several meters.

Animal abuse and innovation

In mid-2019, some creators took advantage of the trend and went one step further by involving animals. There were fishing experiments where the soda would be poured into a fish burrow in wetlands, resulting in the fish emerging from the hole in an attempt to avoid suffocation.

The trend caught fire: More and more people started making similar videos. These "experiments" were mainly conducted on catfish and eels, and then grew to include other animals including snakes, crocodiles, turtles, chicken, guinea fowl, frogs, crabs, tarantula, guinea pigs, hedgehogs, hares and squirrels. Our study [found 200 of these videos posted over the period of four months](#), which received approximately half a billion views.

The increase in the number of target animals, and tools used to capture them, suggests that creators intended to innovate at the expense of wildlife to produce new content. The tools used to capture the animals also increased in number. Earlier videos involved soda and Mentos, but later involved other materials such as toothpaste, detergents, eggs,

perfume and many others.

Many of these materials can be environmentally damaging and could potentially reduce habitat quality and disrupt the functioning of ecosystems. [Detergents, for example, are known to contribute to wetland eutrophication](#)—which is what happens when phosphates and other chemicals encourage excessive plant growth that in turn reduces the animal population.

It appeared that most of the videos originated from Southeast Asia, where a large number of species represented in the videos belonged and are highly threatened. Some of the species we documented are endangered, such as the [Chinese softshell turtle](#), the [elongated tortoise](#) and the [Siamese crocodile](#).

Scripts and stages

Although produced by different channels, all the videos we reviewed had the same script. Stylized in a documentary-like fashion, actors are filmed wandering around the wild looking for animals in burrows. They pour the mint and soda cocktail into the burrow, which results in the animal fleeing. It is likely that many of these videos are staged, with the animals deliberately and intentionally placed in the burrows.

Even if these the animals are not killed by the [video](#) creators, this kind of content presents a huge ethical issue. It also sends a harmful message to hundreds of thousands of viewers who might try to replicate these practices worldwide, threatening [animals](#), disturbing their natural habitats and impacting wild ecosystems.

Most (90 percent) of the videos included ads, meaning [they were monetized for financial gain](#). The presence of a financial incentive for uploading these videos is a challenge to the ability to control the

production and distribution of these kinds of images.

The [current system](#) for detecting and flagging these videos on YouTube is not perfect—many videos stayed accessible for months even [as they violate YouTube's guidelines](#).

Protective solutions

YouTube needs to improve its algorithms to rapidly detect and take down these kinds of videos. Mass flagging of such animal abuse videos is a good way to help YouTube easily detect them and react promptly.

Popular YouTubers have been effectively doing that by denouncing the [animal abuse](#) practices in these videos. Raising awareness about the potential environmental and animal welfare implications of these videos can help address the problem.

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