



# DON'T GO TO THE CETACEAN SHOW

## Imagine being forced to live your life in a small windowless room devoid of anything or anyone familiar to you.

That's what faces a dolphin or whale captured from the wild for display in a zoo or aquarium—violently taken from his or her community, and confined in a concrete tank with no hope of ever being returned to the wild or leading a natural life. Many people who love dolphins and whales (also known as cetaceans) have no idea how barren and unnatural their lives are in captivity. Dolphins in tanks may look as though they are smiling, but this is a quirk of their anatomy (dolphins “smile” even when they are dead); the reality of their lives is tragic.

## DYING TO AMUSE YOU

Wild cetaceans live in complex societies with their own cultures and language and strong social bonds. Many species maintain lifelong close family bonds and travel long distances daily to forage and socialize. Cetaceans in captivity are denied these freedoms. It is impossible for a concrete tank to replicate the natural, ever-changing, three-dimensional surroundings of their natural world. Some captive dolphins, especially in Asia and Latin America, are held in tiny, often dirty swimming pools to attract visitors to vacation resorts; others lead even more artificial lives at noisy ocean theme parks where they are trained to perform circus-like tricks to entertain the paying public.

In Chinese ocean theme parks, dolphins are often used in “photo-op” interactions, where people pay an extra fee to have their picture taken with a dolphin on a stage, where the dolphin must stay out of the water in a “picture pose” (an often uncomfortable and unnatural posture) for many minutes. Often the dolphins in these programs have no rest from the almost constant attention of visitors, or from each other, and if feeding the dolphins is part of the interaction, the dolphins may even end up relying on the public for the majority of their diet—competing (and even fighting) in a crowded pool for scraps of dead fish. These intense settings cause chronic stress for the dolphins; stress-related conditions like stomach ulcers are common. The dolphins involved are also at risk of intestinal damage, poisoning, and even death from ingesting dangerous objects, such

as coins, jewelry and keys, dropped or fed to them by visitors. Interaction programs encourage the public to believe—wrongly—that touching and feeding cetaceans in the wild is safe and legal. In fact these actions are an increasing conservation concern as wild populations are disturbed by misguided boaters and tourists.

## SURVIVORS OF A BRUTAL CAPTURE

Almost all the captive cetaceans displayed today in China were captured from the wild. Capture operations occur in the waters of Japan and Russia to supply other, growing markets, including China. When the target population is small, these removals pose a serious conservation threat. Live captures also raise profound welfare concerns: chased to exhaustion by high-speed boats, wild cetaceans can become injured or drown in the nets used to capture them. The selected animals are then placed in a sling and hauled onto a capture vessel or herded into a shallow sea cage, where they may endure extremes of temperature, overcrowding and contamination. Before they reach their final destination they must survive an intensely stressful journey by land, sea or air, suspended in a sling inside a crate, with only a small amount of water to keep them cool and relieve pressure on their bodies. Despite the fact that a bottlenose dolphin's risk of dying increases six-fold in the first five days after a transport, some are shipped over and over between parks, to take advantage of various tourist seasons, to facilitate



breeding programs, and for other husbandry reasons, such as to relieve overcrowding.

### DRIVE HUNTS

The most brutal cetacean capture method is the drive hunt, in which fishermen disorientate whole pods of dolphins or small whales by banging on pipes suspended in the sea from boats, and corral them into shallow waters. There, beached or trapped close to shore with nets, they are slaughtered and sold for food.

In the Japanese town of Taiji, around 2,000 cetaceans may be killed in this manner every year. But the most lucrative targets of drive hunts are actually the animals “spared” from the slaughter. Show-quality dolphins are sold—for as much as ¥975,000 each—to ocean theme parks in Japan, China, the Middle East, the Caribbean and elsewhere. The captivity industry effectively keeps the drive hunts going.

### ORCAS IN CAPTIVITY

The most popular attractions at ocean theme parks are performing orcas. Less than 60 of these multi-ton mammals are currently held in captivity in several countries—nine are being held in China, all captured since 2012 from the Sea of Okhotsk in Russia. Outside of China, a small number of orcas survive from the approximately 135 captured from the wild since 1964, from the U.S. Pacific Northwest, the Netherlands, Iceland, Argentina and Japan. In the wild, the mean life expectancy for male orcas is 30; for females it is 50. The maximum estimated life span for males is 60–70; for females, it is an amazing 80–90. Yet in captivity, many orcas die by the time they reach their teen-aged years. Most captive orcas die before they reach 25 years of age. Very few have passed 30 and even fewer (less than five) have passed 40, when in fact dozens of such animals should still be alive and in their 40s and 50s by now. At least one orca death and several serious injuries have resulted from fights between orcas stressed to the breaking point by confinement with mismatched tank mates. The nine orcas in China are from a population about which almost nothing is known—their removal



from their family groups no doubt traumatized those left behind and has doomed these poor youngsters to be raised by inexperienced human caretakers.

### DO YOU REALLY WANT TO PUT YOUR CHILD IN THERE?

Dolphins, belugas and orcas are large, powerful predators. Although not naturally aggressive to humans, cetaceans in captivity have inflicted serious injuries—including broken bones and internal injuries—on people who have been swimming with and petting them. Even trainers with extensive experience have been seriously injured and, in these cases, killed by orcas. Dolphins produce three to five times as much urine and feces as human beings. When several dolphins are permanently confined in a concrete tank or sea pen, large amounts of sewage are produced every day. Spray exhaled from cetaceans' blowholes, as well as water contaminated with marine mammals' urine and feces, can transmit several infectious diseases to humans.

### EDUCATION AND CONSERVATION—REALLY?

Although some ocean theme parks, including many in China, have an education component to their cetacean exhibits, much of the information is either biologically wrong or only about the captive individuals on exhibit, not about the species in nature. There is little evidence that the public's understanding of the natural behavior, conservation status and demographics of wild cetaceans is advanced by so-called “educational messages” that accompany a performance. Likewise, despite robust public relations messaging

that conservation is their primary goal, very few ocean theme parks are involved in worthwhile conservation programs in the wild. Almost none in China contribute anything to in-situ conservation.

### YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The most effective way to fight the captive cetacean industry is with your wallet. Don't visit captive cetacean displays! There is no need to confine and degrade cetaceans to enjoy their beauty. Countless responsible whale watching companies allow people to observe cetaceans in their natural environments, while IMAX and other nature films provide a far more realistic (and cheaper) perspective than a visit to a tank. Wonderful museum exhibits, with interactive elements, are far more educational than the circus like tricks in a cetacean performance. You can also help cetaceans by:

1. Reading *Death at SeaWorld* and watching the documentaries *A Fall From Freedom*, *The Cove*, *Keiko: The Untold Story*, and *Blackfish* to learn more about what goes on behind the scenes at captive display facilities.
2. Avoiding ocean theme parks that house cetaceans.
3. Distributing this brochure to your neighbors, family and friends. Contact CCA for more copies.
4. Writing to media, tour operators, cruise lines or other companies, and schools that offer visits to captive display facilities to inform them of the problems.
5. Writing to CCA if you learn of plans to build a new dolphinarium or plans to trade cetaceans.



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— We belong in the wild

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