

Debunking myths about captivity

MYTH Dolphins are happy in captivity

TRUTH The dolphin smile is nature's greatest deception. It creates the illusion that they're always happy." - Ric O'Barry. The "smile" is an anatomical illusion that stems from the configuration of their jaws. This makes them look as if they're always happy, even when they're not. In captivity, limited space curbs a dolphin's natural behaviors. This causes emotional and physical stress that can lead to a weakened immune system and illness.

MYTH Captive dolphins are safe from predators and don't have to look for food like they would in the wild.

TRUTH Dolphins have few natural predators or enemies in the wild. Some orcas - the largest member of the dolphin family - do prey on smaller dolphins, but this is nature. Orcas - as an apex predator, have no natural predators. Both dolphins and orcas are under threat from pollution and overfishing. The single largest threat to these animals in the wild is man.

MYTH Captive dolphin displays have educational value.

TRUTH Dolphins in captivity are shadows of their wild counterparts. Forced into man-made pods, their natural societies collapse and their breeding is controlled by artificial insemination. There is no educational or scientific value that can be placed on keeping dolphins in artificial and unnatural environments. This is miseducation.

MYTH Children establish a connection with dolphins in captivity that would otherwise be impossible to achieve.

TRUTH This statement undervalues the imagination of every child on this earth. Kids love dinosaurs, outer space, and fantastical worlds of wonder created by a beloved author.

TRUTH None of these things are ever personally witnessed but are imagined or viewed through movies and special effects. Children are smart. If they see a pod of wild dolphins stampeding in the wild, they will connect with the dolphins' natural home.

MYTH Rescued dolphins have a good home in captivity

TRUTH Stranded or injured dolphins often require medical care and rehabilitation. This rehabilitation should remain focused on returning the animal to its natural home. When this is not possible, dolphins should not be absorbed into marine park shows. Rather, they should be sent to a sea pen, where they can enjoy the benefits of a mostly natural environment and never again have to perform tricks for large, paying audiences.

"Captive dolphins do not represent dolphins in the real ecosystem any more than Mickey Mouse represents a real mouse" Ric O'Barry

Ric O'Barry, former dolphin trainer and Founder / Director of Dolphin Project.

Dolphin exploitation is driven by public demand as many people remain unaware of the health and emotional issues faced by captive dolphins. Now that you know differently, please do not fund the suffering of dolphins and small whales by ever purchasing a ticket to a dolphin show or dolphin swim programs.

For further information, visit DolphinProject.com



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Dolphins in Captivity



Photo credit: Terah Baylor

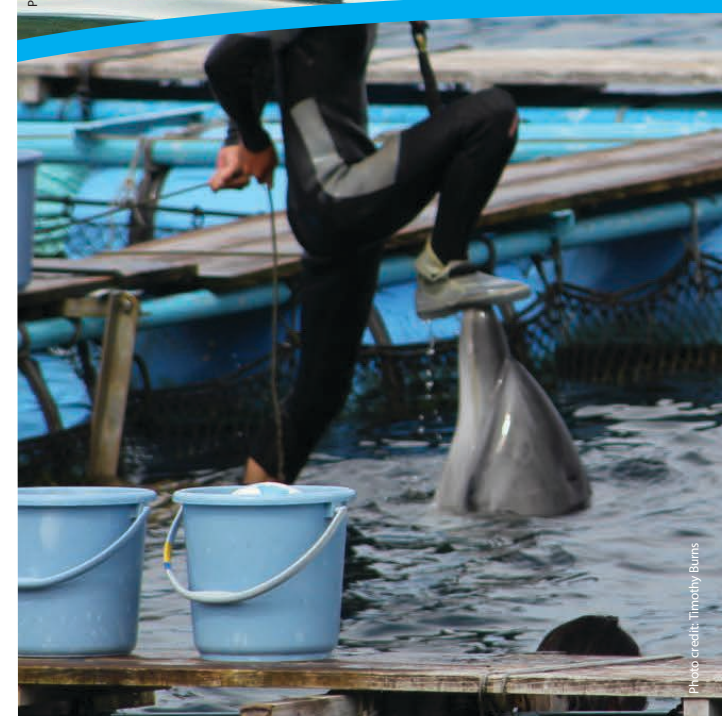


Photo credit: Timothy Burns

Dolphins and whales are like us

Dolphins and whales are very intelligent. They have large, complex brains; they are self-aware; and they create complex languages. Their experience of the world is similar to our own. They should not be forced into a life of servitude any more than people should.



This dolphin, kept in a traveling circus, jumps through a hoop of fire for the amusement of the audience

Photo credit: DolphinProject.com

The captivity industry cares about money, not dolphins

The industry makes enormous profits from captive dolphins. Because of this, they will try to acquire these animals by any means possible.

Some captive dolphin facilities claim they do not get dolphins from the drive hunts or from the wild, but in reality many do. They mislead people and exploit legal loopholes, such as keeping stranded animals even after they have been healed and should be returned to the ocean, or by purchasing an already-captive animal from another facility that was originally wild-caught.

The bottom line is that the industry cares first and foremost about their profits, not the dolphins' well-being.

Captivity = Prison

In the wild, dolphins are constantly on the move, traveling many miles each day. They explore their rich, ever-changing environment with specially adapted sonar and other senses that we humans don't have. They play and swim and sleep together with their family and friends, in close-knit pods.

Captive dolphin facilities are sterile environments, which rob dolphins of their ability to travel and be with their pod. With no place to hide from the public, these environments cause enormous stress, resulting in illness and premature death. There is little difference between a tank and a jail cell.

Even when dolphins are born into captivity, they still suffer the restrictions of a life behind bars, away from the ocean where they belong.

Forced to perform

Dolphins are taught the unnatural behaviors you see in captivity, such as jumping through hoops and "kissing" people, through a training regimen that involves food control. They are kept intentionally hungry. They perform tricks in order to eat.

Dolphins are dying to entertain you

Many of the dolphins you see in captivity were caught from the wild. Some were captured during a so-called drive hunt, which involves chasing wild dolphins with motorboats and herding them into shallow water. A few "show quality" individuals are then chosen for a life in captivity, with no hope of ever being reunited with their families or their ocean home.



The water runs red with blood from dolphin slaughters

Photo credit: DolphinProject.com

The remaining dolphins are often slaughtered. Their deaths can take upwards of 15 minutes. Hundreds of dolphins often die for the capture of a handful of dolphins destined for a life in captivity.

Even when some dolphins are spared ... the process is still traumatic for them and often results in dolphin deaths.

No hope of retirement

Dolphins in captivity perform until the day they die. Very few dolphins have ever been retired or released back into their natural habitat. "A life of captivity is a life of boredom and inactivity -- the opposite of how dolphins live in the wild. Captive dolphins spend a lot of time between shows, languishing in their tanks."

What you can do to help dolphins

Dolphin slaughter and exploitation occurs because of the enormous economic gains that captive dolphins bring to the industry. Here is what you can do:

- 1 Don't buy a ticket to a dolphin show, dolphin swim program, aquarium or marine park.
- 2 Tell your friends and family not to support dolphin and small whale captivity
- 3 Support alternatives to captivity, such as wild dolphin and whale watching tours, films, exhibits without live dolphins, scuba diving and snorkeling
- 4 Donate to Dolphin Project at DolphinProject.com

Dolphins value family, home, and freedom — just like we do. Help them to be free: show your love for dolphins by NOT supporting their capture, slaughter, or exploitation.