

WDCS **Stop**-Captivity Campaign
Captive Whale and Dolphin Shows

Why are we concerned about whales and dolphins in captivity? What does WDCS do to stop it? How can you help?

WDCS understands why people love dolphins and the desire to see them up-close. However, we love dolphins too and it's our job to protect them. We hope that you'll be able to help us protect them too. The following information should help you decide if you believe in captivity or not.

In the wild, whales and dolphins...

- Travel **long distances** for fun and food
- Are **always in motion**, even when resting
- Are among the **fastest** animals in the sea
- Are able to **dive deeply**
- Live in **complex societies** (similar to life at school or at home)
- Can **choose** their friends and who and when they want to hang out
- Are **intelligent** and can solve problems e.g. in Australia dolphins have learnt to protect their beaks with sponges while foraging among sea urchins on the sea bed
- Are **self-aware** and are aware of others
- Have **culture** i.e. they teach and learn things from their elders and each other
- Have **different** ways of communicating (like trying a new language)

What about our Adoption Dolphins?

WDCS Field Officer, Charlie Philips notes: "Our dolphins can quite easily travel up to 60 kilometres in one day. They almost never stop moving and can reach speeds of up to 20mph. Long-lasting friendships between dolphins can stretch over decades and mothers teach their calves about hunting, ships, other species, and about where they live. They also demonstrate interesting means of catching big, powerful salmon, using the fast tidal currents and the seabed geography to make it easier to trap, kill and then swallow these big fish. One of our dolphins, Kesslet, even skins her fish before she eats it!"



Compare what dolphins do in the wild (see above) to those in captivity (see below). How do you think you might feel if you were stuck in a cage or tank for the rest of your life?

Once confined, dolphins...

- Lose their freedom and choice
- Have to undergo medical procedures and artificial diets
- Have to put up with unusual noises and strange smells
- Have to put up with other unfamiliar captive animals and people
- May suffer bullying from other pool mates more dominant than themselves
- Suffer from stress and aggression
- Have a reduced life expectancy
- Find it hard to breed
- Causes of death include drowning and swallowing foreign objects

The trouble with tanks:

- Any tank is small and cramped compared to the open ocean
- Chemically-treated water affects dolphins' sensitive skin, causing ulcers and skin lesions
- Chemically-treated water means no live fish or plants can be placed inside, leaving the tank bare and largely featureless, with no mental stimulation
- Many countries do not have minimum standards for housing captive dolphins

Sea pens also have problems:

- Situated close to pollution sources such as sewage outfall pipes
- May be set in very shallow water, where they become hot in the sun
- Man-made noise from boats and coastal development can be a constant disturbance
- Some are built in hurricane zones, leading to the death and escape of captive dolphins
- They can lead to the destruction of coral reefs and other coastal habitats

Did you know that dolphins are still captured from the wild for captivity?

Frequently Asked Questions

Aren't captive facilities needed for conservation and research?

Captive dolphins live in an artificial environment and follow the same basic routine rather than the varied daily movements of a free-living cetacean. Studies of free-living cetaceans are becoming more and more sophisticated, providing increasingly useful data for the conservation of cetaceans in the wild.

Aren't captive facilities educational?

Educational messages take second place to the performance, which are the main feature of dolphinariums. The tricks that dolphins are taught to display are not the natural behaviours witnessed in the wild, and do little to increase people's knowledge of cetaceans (whales and dolphins) and their habitats. *Where do you think you might learn more information about the real nature of whales and dolphins?*

Are dolphins born in captivity happy there?

Dolphins are still wild animals, even if they were born there. Dolphins have been tamed by people not domesticated like our pets. It is possible to release some whales and dolphins into the wild after rehabilitation.



Isn't captivity safer for dolphins than life in the wild?

They have evolved over millions of years to live in the ocean; it is their natural habitat. The way to solve issues like hunting and pollution is to tackle the source of these problems, not to take these animals out of the seas. This is why WDCS is here!

Dolphin's smile, so they must be happy...

They are born this way. Similarly, they do not frown when they are upset, distressed or angry.

If dolphins were unhappy they would not 'work' or would refuse to eat.

This is not true. Some dolphins will just get on with their training and shows – what else is there for them to do in these bare and boring tanks?

What is WDCS doing?

- Campaigning for an end to capture and trade of all wild whales and dolphins.
- Lobbying for better laws to protect whales and dolphins.
- Working with the tourism industry for better short term living conditions.

WDCS would like to see an END to all cetacean captivity

How can you help us?

- Don't visit facilities that hold whales and dolphins in captivity.
- Watch them in the wild. For example, <http://www.oceansworldwide.co.uk/>
- Spread the word - talk to your friends about the plight of dolphins in captivity.
- Learn about their different behaviour. Take part in WDCS's Dolphin Diploma and receive a dolphin expert certificate!
- If you have seen dolphins in captivity and were unhappy about your visit - tell WDCS.
- Keep an eye on our website to find other ways to help with our campaigns.
- Fundraise for WDCS – hold an event, become a member, or adopt a wild whale/dolphin with WDCS to help us to continue our work.

Go to www.wdcs.org/captivity for more information and current campaigns.

"There is about as much educational benefit to be gained in studying dolphins in captivity as there would be studying mankind by only observing prisoners held in solitary confinement"

Jacques Cousteau