

## **The Online Citizen**

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### **ACRES films training session of RWS wild-caught dolphins but told to leave**

*the following is a media release by ACRES:*

On 14 November 2011, representatives from ACRES, Earth Island Institute (EII) and the Philippines Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) visited Ocean Adventure in the Philippines to film training sessions of the Resorts World Sentosa (RWS) wild-caught dolphins. It was, however, regrettable that staff members of the facility tried to prevent ACRES from filming the dolphins. The RWS wild-caught dolphins were filmed confined in small enclosures, and some have been housed there for almost three years. They were also filmed with basketballs and hula hoops.

Between 2008 and 2009, RWS damaged Singapore's good international reputation by buying 27 wild-caught Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops aduncus*) from the Solomon Islands (who have since banned the export of live dolphins with effect from January 2012). In 2010, two of the dolphins died whilst undergoing training, despite the top-class care that RWS had promised. The remaining 25 wild-caught dolphins are currently being housed and trained at Ocean Adventure in the Philippines and will be transported to RWS soon.

ACRES, EII and PAWS purchased admission tickets to Ocean Adventure and entered the area opposite to where the remaining 25 RWS wild-caught dolphins were being housed. There were no signs indicating that this was a restricted area and none indicating that we were not allowed to film the RWS wild-caught dolphins.

"Initially, we were told we could remain in the area but were not allowed to film the dolphins. However, we were later politely told to leave the area and we were not allowed to film the dolphins, but could film anywhere else in Ocean Adventure. We did not hold any placards or hold any demonstration and remained civil throughout the entire time. We eventually left the area.

All we wanted to do was film the dolphins and witness the training sessions. If RWS has nothing to hide, why are members of the public not allowed to film the wild-caught dolphins?" said Ms. Christina Lee, Campaigns Officer of ACRES.

ACRES, EII and PAWS witnessed and filmed the trainers introducing basketballs and hula-hoops to the dolphins, something highly unnatural. We are puzzled by this as RWS has always maintained that they have no plans for animal shows.

Furthermore, RWS recently stated in their job advertisement that the Marine Mammal Specialist (Job ID 11912) responsibilities include "behavioral conditioning of the mammals for...show-type behaviors". They, however, clarified that "the responsibilities of the marine mammal specialists include engaging in enrichment practices with the dolphins to display natural behaviors commonly seen in the wild...".

"It is tragic to see these dolphins, who once roamed the vast open oceans, now having to resort to playing with basketballs and hula hoops. We hope that RWS provides the public with complete details with regard to how the dolphins are housed and trained and that they be truthful. ACRES remains committed to an open dialogue, but we regret that RWS have continued to decline to

respond to all our concerns and have now prevented us from filming how the wild-caught dolphins are housed and trained” said Mr. Louis Ng, Executive Director of ACRES