

TODAY

21 October 2011

Swim at RWS or in the ocean?

Letter from Christina Lee Jiawai Campaigns Officer, Animal Concerns Research & Education Society

I REFER to the letter "We should support RWS' Marine Life Park" (Oct 18), whose main theme was about "choice" and which suggested that, if given a choice, Singaporeans would choose a small but safe flat instead of a large country estate.

The reality for the Resorts World Sentosa dolphins is that they had no choice. They were removed from their natural habitat and will be confined against their will.

They have lost control over their lives, from what and when they eat to whom they socialise with and where.

The Animal Concerns Research & Education Society doubts that any Singaporean would want the lives these dolphins are now living.

Captive dolphins, in general, are not "choosing" to interact with humans during contact sessions or to perform certain behaviours on demand but instead are often doing so to get fed.

Yes, they could choose to go hungry, but most animals will avoid hunger at all costs, and a hungry dolphin will do just about anything for a fish, even a dead, frozen one.

While it is true that wild dolphins may not enjoy a carefree life, they do enjoy freedom and choice.

With regard to conservation, we agree it is vital, but we cannot agree that catching dolphins from the wild is supporting these efforts.

According to the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the threats facing Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins (the species purchased by RWS) include live capture for oceanariums.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) does allow the capture of dolphins from the wild.

However, according to the IUCN, catching more dolphins such as the Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin, which is preferred as a captive, display species, "makes them vulnerable to depletion from such catches".

The IUCN states that exports of this species should not take place from the Solomon Islands and that "CITES parties should not issue permits to import dolphins" from these islands.

How then can RWS claim to be protecting these dolphins while contributing to one of their threats to survival in the Solomon Islands?

Over 680,000 people have joined ACRES to urge RWS to release the dolphins. Our challenge to RWS is simple, and it leaves the decision to the dolphins.

If it believes that its remaining 25 dolphins are happy in their current situation, then ACRES asks that RWS gives the dolphins a chance to swim freely again in the ocean.

If they truly wish to remain living with their trainers and in captivity, then surely they will not swim away but remain with the trainers. Will RWS agree to this challenge?

Give 25 dolphins at Marine Life Park the choice

Marine Life Park should be supported

Letter from Auw Chor Wah

I could not agree more with Mr Neil Wilkinson, in his letter "We should support RWS' Marine Life Park" (Oct 18).

Resorts World Sentosa's dolphins are the lucky few who will not only be given balanced and nutritious food, but imagine the love their caregivers would bestow on them.

Others may say that these animals are best appreciated in the wild, but for senior citizens like me, I would relish to see them up close without having to travel overseas.

It is a rare opportunity for both young and old Singaporeans to learn more about dolphins.