

GoodPaper

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HAPPY HUMANS AND SAD DOLPHINS

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Will a photo of hundreds of happy humans standing to form a shape of a dolphin on an open field do what a plea from a Mexican Senator and condemnation from conservation bodies and celebrities across the globe has not been able to do so far?

Release 25 still living bottlenose dolphins into the wild.

There are 25 of the world's saddest dolphins, caught from the Solomon Islands, which are currently in captivity at Subic Bay in the Philippines. They are being trained to interact with humans for a spa therapy programme which will take place in 2012 at Resorts World Sentosa (RWS) Marine Life Park, the world's largest oceanarium, in Singapore. 2 dolphins have already died from an infection that was picked up while in captivity and there is documented evidence that RWS has not taken proper care of the 25 dolphins in accordance with international dolphin care standards.

There are several reasons why many people believe that RWS is doing something highly unethical.

The process of capturing and transporting dolphins is highly risky and traumatic with 30% to 80% of dolphins dying during the capture process. At least 12 dolphins out of 28 brought to Mexico in 2003 have already died which prompted Mexico to ban the import of dolphins in 2006.

Dolphins raised in the wild with thousands of kilometres of coral, wildlife and open seas to adventure, play in and experience are now be in a prison with limited interaction and space.

What does our forcible handling of these intelligent animals say about us.

RWS is promoting the capture and training of the dolphins as being in the interest of educating the public. If the public wants to be educated on how dolphins behave, will watching performing dolphins and touching them be the best way for the public to learn? Can money spent to educate the public on dolphins be done better another way?

For example,

Subsidised tours to the Solomon Islands, so that interested members of the public can see dolphins in their natural habitats.

Creating and airing a television series about dolphins?

An annual public education campaign about dolphins, just as many health awareness societies in Singapore do?

Is it really, really worth it?

The Concert!

Just as a campaign was successful in preventing a whale shark from coming to Singapore, local NGOs are campaigning to ask RWS free the dolphins. To this end, on Sunday, 28 August 2011 an open concert, organised by Animal Concerns and Research & Education Society, was held at Hong Lim Park. The concertgoers were asked to wear black tops and stand in the formation of a dolphin so that a picture could be taken. Along with Mexican Senator Jorge Legorreta Ordorica's letter to Singapore's former National Development Minister, Mah Bow Tan, UPS' declaration that it will no longer transport dolphins and the world's biggest dolphin broker's retirement from the wild dolphin trade, the concert event and pictures are mounting evidence that capturing and using the dolphins as a commercial attraction is unacceptable to the local and international community.

What an enjoyable concert it was. The humans were happy. The performers were happy. The music was happy. The dogs were happy. The concert organisers and various celebrities gave speeches. The musicians performed their music. The kids got to name dolphins, no doubt good practice for having more happy baby humans many years in the future. Lots of photos were taken. Food was eaten. Volunteers managed the crowds. Concertgoers played with their children. Half an hour was spent standing up in a group so that the photo could be taken.

The event wrapped up at 7.30pm and everyone, except the dolphins went home. Will the concert and the pictures work? Will the world's saddest dolphins get to go home too?

Make it happen by liking the Facebook page and visiting the website.

The Wonderful World of Bottlenose Dolphins

They may look happy all the time, but dolphins cannot smile. The smile you see is simply the way their mouth is shaped.

Bottlenose dolphins are the most well known type of dolphin. They generally live in pods of 10 to 30 dolphins and hunt for fish, shellfish and squid, individually and in teams, by using sonar echolocation where they emit clicks and listen for the return echo in similar manner to bats.

Living up to 40 years, they are 2 to 4 metres long and weigh between 150 to 650 kilogrammes. The name bottlenose is a reference to the fact that their jaws, also called a rostrum, extends from the head in a bottle-like shape. Their nose is a blowhole on top of their heads. As with all mammals, they need air to breathe but dolphins are capable of staying underwater for 20 minutes.

They use body language such as head butts and snapping jaws; whistles and burst of sounds to communicate. For example three pulsed sounds is a sign that a dolphin is competing for a piece of food to warn off other dolphins. Dolphins have been observed using a marine sponge to protect their rostrum when searching for food in on sandy sea bottoms.

Dolphins have rescued divers at risk from great white sharks and beached sperm whales that were not able to swim away safely after being refloated by human rescuers. Since before 1847, a pod of bottlenose dolphins in Laguna in South Brazil drive fish towards the shores where fishermen are waiting. When one dolphin rolls over, the fishermen throw out their nets to catch the fish. The dolphins then eat any fish that escape the nets.