

Wildsingapore News

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Why Acres is against Resorts World Sentosa's dolphin plan

I refer to the editorial last Sunday ('Activists going too far?').

It is true that the various Sea Worlds in the United States feature dolphins. But in the late 1980s, facilities in the US implemented a voluntary moratorium on the collection of bottlenose dolphins from the wild, and this remains in place.

Resorts World Sentosa (RWS) has gone against this progressive movement and bought dolphins captured from the wild in the Solomon Islands.

The Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (Acres) launched its campaign following almost five years of closed-door discussions with RWS, which has failed to live up to its promises.

Despite stating that 'its dolphin enclosure will 'far exceed' internationally recognised minimum space requirements for the animals', RWS housed the wild-caught dolphins in small, rusty enclosures in Langkawi for almost a year and two dolphins died there.

Acres and the over 670,000 people who have joined us in this campaign are not calling for the closure of the Marine Life Park. We are simply calling for RWS to focus on housing species which can cope with captivity, to focus on ethical animal acquisitions and run an attraction that can play a proper role in education and conservation.

Louis Ng
Executive Director
Animal Concerns Research
and Education Society

Activists going too far?

Sunday Times 14 Aug 11;

Three months ago, local animal protection group Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (Acres) launched a protest campaign against Resort World Sentosa's (RWS) plan to exhibit wild-caught dolphins in its Marine Life Park. It has since attracted 13,800 supporters to its cause.

Now, also joining cause with Acres, two American online activist groups, Avaaz and Change.org, have collected a total of nearly 800,000 signatures from members around the world, including Singaporeans. They want RWS to free the 25 dolphins which were caught off the Solomon Islands, near Papua New Guinea.

A key player in the protests is 'born again' dolphin rescuer Ric O'Barry, who in the 1960s trained the five dolphins which collectively played Flipper in the hit TV series which helped create a fascination among viewers worldwide with the marine mammal. The 72-year-old has offered his help to RWS to rehabilitate the dolphins and release them to the wild.

Last Wednesday, a spokesman for RWS said the 25 dolphins kept meanwhile in the Philippines are thriving. She contended that 'despite contrary claims, the track record for marine mammal releases is patchy at best'.

Both Mr O'Barry and the New York-based Avaaz warned RWS that it should not underestimate 'people power' in the thwarting of its plan. But why haven't the activists push their cause against Sea World, the American chain of oceanariums and water parks, the impartial observer may ask. The various Sea Worlds in the United States and the one on the Gold Coast in Australia all feature dolphins. It isn't clear to us why RWS has been singled out for attention when there are so many other similar attractions elsewhere operating for so long.

On its part, it would help RWS' cause if it made sure that it abides by - and even exceeds - the international norms set for oceanariums. In doing so, it will eventually win the goodwill of the public, if not the animal activists.

RWS responds to dolphin claims

Sunday Times 28 Aug 11;

I refer to last Sunday's letter 'Why Acres is against RWS' dolphin plan' by Mr Louis Ng of the Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (Acres).

Given the inaccuracies in Mr Ng's letter, allow me to set the record. At the time we announced our plans for the Marine Life Park, we initiated a face-to-face dialogue with Acres. Clearly, both parties met on common ground in that we put the welfare of the animals above all else.

Till today, we remain open to collaboration with Acres on education with regard to marine animals, including that of the dolphins in our care. We are puzzled by Mr Ng's allegation of our failure 'to live up to (our) promises', as these meetings had ended somewhat inconclusively, with our agreement to disagree.

In recent weeks, Acres has gone on various public platforms with further inaccurate statements pertaining to our dolphins, despite our numerous clarifications and presentation of facts.

These allegations range from the inaccurate - that we are planning to keep our animals at our 'spa' - to the sensational - such as our animals dying in an 'ordeal'. We have posted our replies to these charges on our blog:

<http://www.rwsentosablog.com/>

Over the last three years, Resorts World Sentosa has taken an active role in promoting sustainable sharks-finning, saved corals, funded antipoaching patrolling in the Galapagos Islands, and established the Marine Life Fund for marine conservation projects.

We recently announced a tie-up with the Sea Research Foundation to bring the world-renowned Jason Project and its educational programmes to Singapore.

Members of our Marine Life Park team are devoting their lives and career learning about and caring for their charges and are no different from many animal lovers.

Krist Boo (Ms)

Senior vice-president, Communications
Resorts World Sentosa