

Marine animal captivity end the exploitation sociology essay



Marine animals have been held captive for hundreds of years and for a variety of reasons. As humans began to investigate the fascinating world below the ocean's surface, animal captivity became an everyday occurrence. Some animals have been captured as a means of research so scientists, as well as the public, can observe and learn more about them (" Marine Mammals in Captivity"). However, marine animals have also been exhibited simply for amusement and profit (" Do Marine Mammals Belong in Captivity in the 21st Century?"). Throughout history, humans have abused their relative power over marine creatures by capturing and detaining them. This cruel and unjust captivity commences with the act of capture and continues by diminishing marine animals' quality of life.

The crime of captivity begins as early as marine mammal capture. In the past, animal capture was a violent and traumatic process. Over the years, it has become progressively less malicious. However, the animals still suffer. Hunters herd the animals into shallow waters and proceed to entrap them in nets and slings (" Do Marine Mammals Belong in Captivity in the 21st Century?"). Captures can include high-speed chases intended to exhaust the animals, which makes them easier to catch. Some fisherman will actually ride the animals until they are completely worn out (" The Case Against Marine Mammals in Captivity"). In Japan, fisherman are hired by captivity agencies to herd entire pods of dolphins so that the best and most promising mammals can be selected, while the remaining dolphins are slaughtered (" Global Ocean - Marine Mammal Anti-Captivity Officer"). In another instance, over 200 dolphins were driven into a fishing port, where they crashed into boats and each other. After becoming tangled in the chaos of nets, boats,

and animals, many dolphins died of drowning (“ Marine Animal Exhibits: Chlorinated Prisons”). Although the government works to regulate the individuals and organizations that capture marine animals, even the gentlest capture causes unforeseeable consequences.

Marine animals such as dolphins travel in groups and while it may seem like taking only one or two of the animals would cause no harm, it is extremely detrimental to the group as a whole. Whales, specifically orcas, are the largest animals held in captivity (“ Marine Animal Exhibits: Chlorinated Prisons”). While orcas remain with their mothers for life in the wild, hunters often separate mother and child. Dolphins swim together in “ pods,” a family unit that consists of an adult dolphin and her offspring. These families are torn apart by captivity. Even if not all of the animals are captured, the free animals are left without a crucial member of their community. Some dolphins die simply from the stress of losing a family member or watching their companions being captured (“ Marine Animal Exhibits: Chlorinated Prisons”). One study found that the mortality rate for bottlenose dolphins increased six-fold immediately after a capture (“ The Case Against Marine Mammals in Captivity). The negative affects of animal capture are undeniable proof that holding marine animals captive is an unnatural and immoral act.

Even after the vicious and traumatic capture, marine animals continue to suffer in captivity. Although many trainers work to ensure that animal habitats are suitable for the animals they house, no man made structure can replace the natural habitat and ecosystem of the ocean. In addition, these artificial environments pose many risks to the animals they accommodate.

First, the water of the tank can cause serious health risks. Many aquariums
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and marine parks pump water in directly from the ocean. However, this water is filtered and chlorine is added while micro and macro marine life is removed (“ Killer Whales in Captivity”). This treatment creates harsh water full of chemicals, which can irritate the skin of marine mammals. Although the chemicals are used to purify the water, bacteria are still present and the animals’ skin cannot tolerate the alien bacteria. Some dolphins go blind (French), while others animals suffer from skin diseases (“ Marine Mammals in Captivity”). In other cases, orcas experience dorsal fin collapse. This occurs because the whales do not have the support of a large body of water, such as the ocean, and gravity pulls the tall appendage downward (“ Marine Mammals in Captivity”).

The issues are not limited to physical conditions. Being held in captivity actually affects the mental functions and capacity of marine creatures. Animals such as whales and dolphins utilize echolocation while living in the ocean. In this wide and varied body of water, these animals are constantly alert and exercising their brains. However, in a dull environment such as a small aquarium, these animals have no use for their highly evolved talent (“ Marine Animal Exhibits: Chlorinated Prisons). Instead, they are forced to swim in circles without exercising the functions of their brain. For orcas, which are extremely sensitive to sound, the outside noises of water pumps and cheering crowds harm their hearing (“ Killer Whales in Captivity”). Some studies show that dolphin brains shrink a frightening 42% while in captivity (“ The Life of a Dolphin in Captivity”), and some dolphins have been driven insane by the constant reverberations of their own sonar waves that hit nothing but blank walls (“ Marine Animal Exhibits: Chlorinated Prisons”).

Not only are marine animals' brain functions halted, they also become socially and emotionally upset while in captivity. As mentioned earlier, dolphins and orcas are negatively affected by the separation of pods. Despite being social creatures that tend to have long term companionships, these mammals are separated from their families and isolated on their own when they are held captive. (" The Case Against Marine Mammals in Captivity"). The issues are furthered by trainers' treatment of the animals. For example, trainers will separate the acutely social dolphins when they misbehave, forcing them into isolation (" Marine Animal Exhibits: Chlorinated Prisons"). The torture continues in the feeding. In a technique called the " Pavlovian regime," trainers starve dolphins so that they will perform. Food is only administered as a reward to the dolphin for successful completion of tricks. Trainers effectively teach the dolphins that food is not a natural right of existence, but is instead only attained through submission and performance (" The Life of a Dolphin in Captivity"). It's also important to consider the food given to the animals - instead of live, freshly caught, natural marine organisms, captured marine animals are fed frozen fish and vitamin supplements (" Killer Whales in Captivity"). This unnatural diet hurts the metabolism of these creatures and hinders their instinctual predatory behavior.

Dolphins that live in captivity are forced to swim in circles in six-foot deep tanks that stretch twenty-four inches by twenty-four inches (" Marine Animal Exhibits: Chlorinated Prisons"). This lack of space literally suffocates the dolphins, who swim up to 100 miles each day in the wild. Finally, it's important to consider the behavior of freed marine animals. Dolphins and

whales alike spend their days diving hundreds of meters, swimming hundreds of miles, and roaming freely about the ocean (“ Marine Mammals in Captivity”). Unlike seals and sea lions, dolphins and whales rarely come up to the shore to perch and can stay underwater up to thirty minutes. The confinement of a tank forces a creature that previously spent 80-90% of its time underwater into a creature that is constantly above the water (“ Marine Mammals in Captivity”).

Some would argue that marine animal captivity has positive benefits for animals. For example, if a marine animal is held captive, humans are able to study and observe the animal, which in turn allows for a greater understanding of the species. This understanding allows humans to actually go out and assist the marine animals in the future. However, a marine animal held in captivity actually holds little educational value. These animals are forced to act differently than they do in the wild. Because they are confined to cages and tanks, they cannot roam and live as they would in the vast ocean. This means that when scientists observe an animal in a tank, he or she is not seeing the way the animal really acts, lives or behaves, but instead it's contrived adaptations to life in a tank (“ The Case Against Marine Mammals in Captivity”). Others argue that holding marine animals in captivity saves them from the harsher environments in the wild and protects them from predators and pollution. However, this argument is incorrect. It is impossible for humans to judge what environment is too harsh for any particular animal. Marine animals have survived and evolved for thousands of years without human salvation or interaction and humans must allow this natural cycle to continue. In the wild, unhindered by human meddling, the

evolutionary cycle will continue as it should and as is natural. Some species may become extinct or evolve into even more complex animals - this is not a negative progression but is instead the circle of life (" The Case Against Marine Mammals in Captivity"). While dolphins in their natural habitat can live to their forties and fifties, dolphins in aquariums and tanks often die before they reach twenty (" Marine Mammals in Captivity"). Over the years, nearly 4, 000 sea lions, seals, and dolphins have died in captivity, and more than half of these deaths are human related. This includes things such as swallowing coins, dying of heat stroke, and swimming in contaminated water (" Marine Animal Exhibits: Chlorinated Prisons"). Although they claim to increase the longevity of marine animals' lives, those who capture marine animals end up hurting them and, in the long run, harming the natural flow of life.

It's certain that important information can be gained from marine animal captivity. However, holding wild animals hostage is immoral and unnecessary. Although humans are capable of capturing marine animals, this prevents them from existing in their natural habitat and only serves to hurt the species. To help stop captivity, it's important not to visit captive marine mammals in zoos or parks (" Marine Animal Exhibits: Chlorinated Prisons"). Also, instead of holding the animals hostage under the guise of saving them from even harsher natural environments, society should work to be environmentally conscious and preserve the animals' natural habitats, allowing them to live without the pollution of human waste. Holding marine animals in captivity is unequivocally wrong. No matter the claims of salvation and education, animal captivity is exploitation of animals.