Orcas In Captivity
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Abstract

The most common reason as to why orcas should not be held captive is the size of their tanks. In the wild, orcas are swimming up to 100 miles a day and dive down 200 feet (Orcas in the Wild, 1). The tanks that whales are being kept in in captivity Hardy allow them to swim. The smallest pools are at the Miami Seaquarium which is 60 feet long, 38 feet wide, and 10 feet deep. Marineland Cote D’Azur has the largest pools out of all 12 parks. Their back pool is 210 feet in length, 100 in width and 40 in depth (Current Facilities, 1). It is significantly larger than the Miami Seaquarium, but you can’t compare 210 feet to the ocean.

Environment

Orcas are very social, family-oriented mammals. They spend their entire lives never separating from their mothers. Each family swims in a group called a pod, with usually 1-3 maternal groups. The only two things that orcas are ever separate a mother and her child are death and captivity. Calves who are born in captivity are usually transferred to different parks by the time they are six months old. Unlike the wild, whales are generally in tanks with members from different pods which can create a series of problems (Current Facilities, 2). Each pod has its own behavior and language, so when they are trapped in a tank with whales from other pods they don’t always get along (Blackfish). Whales are often isolated by themselves as well. Trainers usually do this if the animal is acting out (Current Facilities, 2).

Premature Deaths

A human can live anywhere from 70-100 years. Orcas have similar lifespans. On average, a male orca living in the wild can live anywhere from 50-60 years. Females usually live longer, from 80-90 years. However, in captivity, they live 10 years on average. Since 1961, 148 orcas have been captured from the wild, 126 of those whales are now dead. The longest surviving orca, Corky, was captured in 1969 and is now living in Sea World, San Diego (Fate of Captive Orcas, 1).

Dorsal Fin

The majority of people have noticed that in captivity, the male orca dorsal fin is bent. Because there is no room to swim, the fin is bent. The water pressure from whales swimming so many miles is what keeps the tissue healthy and straight. Age and stress can also cause the fin to bend in captivity and in the wild. However, collapsed dorsal fins are not as common in the wild as in captivity.

Bibliography