Whales in Captivity
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Abstract

Keeping whales captive has generated a number of groups to protest the keeping of whales. Groups such as Greenpeace, No Whales in Captivity, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS), and the World Society for Protection of Animals (WSPA) actively campaign to see these whales released back into the wild. Many issues have led to the demand for the freeing of the whales and their release back into the wild. Due to these issues many of today’s marine biologist and animal welfare advocates call for all of the whales to be released into the wild. However, not much is known how much money it would take to release all the whales. The process to release a whale back into the wild is long and delicate. They would have to be rehabilitated to learn what it is like to live back into the wild and it is unknown whether or not the particular whale released is able to rejoin the pod from which it had been taken from originally. (McCarthy, 2010).

Background Info

Keeping whales in captivity is a polarizing subject. Many of the tanks are not able to hold bigger species of whales such as Sperm or Blue whales. Many of the whales in captivity are of the much smaller variety that features mainly dolphin and killer whale species. One of the more well-known species of whale is the Orca. Today there are 42 orcas held in captivity in 11 marine parks spread across 11 countries. A local example of one such park that keeps whales in captivity is San Diego’s SeaWorld. (WDCS.org, accessed 12/12). Many of the whales were captured and then brought into captivity or bred and born into captivity. Some of the pros for keeping whales in a captive environment include studying the biology of the whale for further knowledge, using captive whales to repopulate areas that have seen a decline of a particular species of whale, and for people to see and be educated about whales. (Baleinesendirect.net, accessed 12/12). There are also many issues with keeping whales in captivity that can prove harmful to both whale and human alike. Some issues that are associated with captive whales include a high mortality rate for whales that live in captivity, limited tanks to do not give off an atmosphere of the wild, and much of the study can be done outside of captivity in the wild where the whales would be more vocal instead of silent in captivity. (Michael McCarthy, E. E. (2010, Feb 26). Should we be keeping animals such as an orca or dolphin at an aquarium or zoo, it is beneficial to the “Design” menu and click on “Colors”. You can resize it as needed. Additional elements to your poster: Drag a placeholder onto existing elements to your poster: Drag a placeholder onto

Opponents to captivity

Problems within captivity

Whales in captivity develop problems that other whales in the wild do not develop. They range from physical developments to more mental problems that can lead to death. One physical repercussion of keeping a killer whale in captivity is the dropping of the dorsal fin. This does not often happen in the wild and most scientists attribute it to the constant circling around their tanks instead of swimming in a straight line. It also has been observed that at least ten percent of orcas at a SeaWorld park have tilted fins. (Smith, 2004). Another problem that arises from keeping whales captive is the stress on the whales that is a result of their captivity. The stress on the whales is a contributing factor to the death of whales in captivity. (Smith, 2004). Captive killer whales also have been responsible for a number of attacks on their trainers. A number of 24 people around the world have been attacked by killer whales and some of those attacks have proved to be fatal. (McCathy, 2010). A lot of this aggression is attributed to the stress of living in a confined area that limits their movement. The stress causes increased aggression, disease, and shortens lifespan with the whales held in captivity. (McCarthy, 2010).

Analysis

A positive to keeping whales in captivity is to learn more about these creatures and figure out some of their behaviors. Researchers are also trying to figure out how to better care for the whales that are currently in captivity and are trying to figure out better conditions that promote a better lifestyle for the whales in captivity. A study that has occurred with captive whales was the study of sexual behaviors with captive beluga whales. The population size in this study was five adult males and seven female whales. The researchers found that the seasons result in increased activity in the month of March. At the end of the study 18 beluga calves were born usually in the summer months which allude to the whales being more active in the month of March. (Glaubick et al. 2010). Another study that employed the use of captive whales focused on how to better take care of the whales in captivity using the acoustic activity of the whales in order to figure things out. The researchers were trying to combat the stress that is commonplace in captive whales. Two beluga whales were used in this research and were transported from Argentina to Spain. The experiment is to measure their activity at their original site and then later on see how they react to their new environment in Spain. The researchers relied on the whales echolocation vocalizations in order to measure the activity and to see the reactions of a different environment. In the test a number of seals were introduced and ultimately the whales experience less stress when they interacted with the seals in their new environment. The study argued that it is beneficial for whales to be measured acoustically in order to successfully figure out and relive the stress on whales; however the researchers have also said that they need to run more test in order to get better results. (Castellote & Fossa, 2006).

Conclusion

Whales have been captured and held in captivity over a period of sixty years. These captive whales have helped in many different fields of research and have been entertaining both the old and young in many areas for many years. “Jacques Cousteau once said: ‘No aquarium, no tank or marine park, however spacious it may be, can begin to duplicate the conditions of the sea. And no dolphin who inhabits one of these aquariums can be described as a “normal” dolphin. The conclusions drawn by observing the behaviour of such dolphins are often misleading when applied to dolphins as a whole.’ ” (Smith, 2004). This implies that while it is interesting and educational to view a majestic and interesting animal such as an orca or dolphin at an aquarium or zoo, it is beneficial that the animal be free to be who it naturally is in the wild instead of being held up in a tank and live a harder than the ones in the wild.

References


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