Whales are the largest mammals on the planet. Humans have hunted them for food and revered them for their size and gentle nature. People can observe whales at Seaworld, but those whales are living in captivity. Although Seaworld has not captured a whale in more than thirty years, there is a growing debate about whether whales should be kept or bred in captivity. The first Orcas were taken into captivity in the early 1960s because marine parks saw whales as a way to increase park attendance while increasing ticket prices. However, Orcas in captivity are often bored and lonely. Over time, some have become aggressive and violent, attacking each other or even themselves. To make matters worse, Orcas are becoming endangered due to decreasing food supplies and increasingly toxic environments. It has led to differing opinions about exactly how to go about truly saving these beautiful creatures.

**Introduction**

**Should Whales be in Captivity?**

At this very moment, Voyager II is traveling through interstellar space. It sends information to us, but it also is a messenger. It is carrying information about our “universe” address, scientific advancements, music, images, and greetings. One such greeting, this whaling song, is going to Voyager I and II because there is some chance that it might pass information to us, but it also is a messenger. It is carrying information about the incredible creatures on this planet. In fact, some young people have been inspired to dedicate their lives to saving different species as a direct result of seeing animals in captivity.

**Introduction: Whales or Dolphins?**

Whales are part of the class Mammalia, Phylum Chordata. They look like a fish because they have gills. However, they breathe air through a set of lungs. They are warm-blooded and experience blood reflux similar to humans. In every way, they are mammals, yet they also live their entire lives in the water. It is this balance that gives them the order of Cetacea, or “aquatic mammal”. Although many whales are filter feeders, they are also hunters. Killer whales, specifically Orcas, belong to the dolphin family. They are “toothed mammals” that are one of the only species of cetaceans known to hunt for food using echolocation. They often hunt in pods, employing sophisticated methods to stalk their prey. Orcas are particularly fond of salmon. In captivity, whales are fed gelatin from cows and pigs. These are not part of a whale’s natural diet.

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According to CBS News and World Report, Orcas can live up to 80 years in the wild. In captivity, they rarely live more than two decades.

**Abstract**

**Why Are Whales in Captivity?**

Author Stephen Messenger, senior writer for “The Dodo”, wrote an article about the very first captured Orca. Wanda was a long Orca that was spotted swimming off the coast of Newport Beach in November of 1961. On the morning of November 18, in front of a crowd of thousands, Marineland employees took the very first captive of a whale. After a full day of dodging and struggling, Wanda finally gave up and was caught. She was transported to Los Angeles where she was placed in a very small tank. Two days later, she committed suicide by repeatedly slamming her head against the tank wall.

Why are Orcas in captivity? The answer is greed. The now defunct Marineland wanted to increase profits. A captive Orca would have provided them the means and the reason to increase attendance and ticket prices. In addition to profit, some proponents argue that, without captive animals, many people would never have the chance to see most of the incredible creatures on this planet. In fact, some young people have been inspired to dedicate their lives to saving different species as a direct result of seeing animals in captivity.

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**The Effects of Captivity**

**Morgan was a Killer Whale at Sea World, Spain who tried to commit suicide by beaching herself. Many point to this event as proof of depression.**

Given the enormous size of the Orca, it stands to reason that the largest saltwater tanks on earth wouldn’t come close to being acceptable. According to the US Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, Orcas in the wild can swim over 144 miles a day. This would be equal to 4,280 tank laps at an aquatic park.

1. Boredom- Captive Orcas display signs of boredom and listlessness in captivity.
2. Depression- Captive Orcas have displayed overt signs of depression in captivity.
3. Anger and Violence- In 2010, Dawn Branch au, a Seaworld whale trainer, was killed during one of the shows. This story demonstrates how intelligent Orcas are.

**Are Orcas Going Extinct?**

According to Drew McFarlane, a weather journalist in Portland, Oregon, Orcas are experiencing an extinction event. “Lack of prey, disturbance from boat traffic and toxic contamination” have led to a dramatic decrease in Orcas in the wild. There are almost as many Orcas in captivity as in the wild.

Climate change has led to dwindling food supplies and health issues. Captivity is bad for Orcas, but is our planet too toxic for wild Orcas?

**What is the Solution?**

Captivity is bad for Orcas, yet our planet may not be able to sustain Orcas in the wild. What is the answer?

**The Whale Sanctuary Project** – Captive whales and dolphins can be rehabilitated and released into the wild or into a designated sanctuary designed to support Orcas. [https://whalesanctuaryproject.org](https://whalesanctuaryproject.org) - Canadian Sanctuary for Killer Whales - The government of Canada has announced the creation of new ocean sanctuaries and chimchok salmon enhancements, directing an additional $61.5 million to protect endangered killer whales. [https://globalnews.ca/news/4617979/killer-whales-canada-southern-violence/](https://globalnews.ca/news/4617979/killer-whales-canada-southern-violence/)

On August 8, 1970, the Orcas of Puget Sound were herded into Penn Cove. They were caught one by one and then shipped all over the globe to sea parks everywhere. Within ten years, every single family member except one, Tokitae, had died. Tokitae has lived for years in a tank at Seaquarium in Miami, alone and depressed. The Lummi Nation sued Seaquarium, asking for her release, but the 11th Circuit denied their request. Seaquarium has argued that the dwindling food supplies coupled with increasing toxins in the waters would likely kill Tokitae sooner than if she stays in captivity.


**References**


