



SeaWorld: The Truth Is in Our Parks and People

An Open Letter from SeaWorld's Animal Advocates

Inaccurate reports recently have generated questions about SeaWorld and the animals in our care. The truth is in our parks and people, and it's time to set the record straight.

The men and women of SeaWorld are true animal advocates. We are the 1,500 scientists, researchers, veterinarians, trainers, marine biologists, aquarists, aviculturists, educators and conservationists who have dedicated our lives to the animals in our care as well as those in the wild that are injured, ill or orphaned. Whether it's a sea lion, manatee, sea turtle or whale, we are on call 24/7.

Here are some important facts about SeaWorld and our work:

SeaWorld does not capture killer whales in the wild. Due to the groundbreaking success of our research in marine mammal reproduction, we haven't collected a killer whale from the wild in 35 years. In fact, only two of the whales in our care were collected by SeaWorld and they continue to be in our care today. In addition, our research has led to a much greater understanding of whales in the wild, giving researchers important scientific insights surrounding marine mammal reproduction.

We do not separate killer whale moms and calves. SeaWorld recognizes the important bond between mother and calf. On the rare occasion that a mother killer whale cannot care for the calf herself, we have successfully hand raised and reintroduced the calf. Whales are only moved to maintain a healthy social structure.

SeaWorld invests millions of dollars in the care of our killer whales. In the last three years alone, we have invested \$70 million in our killer whale habitats and millions of dollars annually in support of these facilities. Our habitats are among the largest in the world today. They are state-of-the-art, multimillion-gallon environments of cooled and filtered water that allow for the highest and safest standards of care. We give our animals restaurant-quality fish, exercise, veterinary care, mental stimulation, and the company of other members of their species.

SeaWorld's killer whales' life spans are equivalent with those in the wild. While studies continue to define the average life span of killer whales in the wild, the most recent science suggests that our killer whales' life spans are comparable — indeed, five of our animals are older than 30, and one of our whales is close to 50.

The killer whales in our care benefit those in the wild. We work with universities, governmental agencies and NGOs to increase the body of knowledge about and the understanding of killer whales — from their anatomy and reproductive biology to their auditory abilities. Some populations of wild killer whales have been classified as endangered or threatened, demonstrating the potential critical nature of these research opportunities. This type of controlled research and study is simply not possible in the wild, and has significant real-world benefits to the killer whales that live there.

SeaWorld is a world leader in animal rescue. The millions of people who visit our parks each year make possible SeaWorld's world-renowned work in rescue, rehabilitation and release. We are constantly innovating when it comes to this care: Our veterinarians have created nursing bottles to hand-feed orphaned whales, prosthetics to save sea turtles, and a wetsuit to help injured manatees stay afloat during rehabilitation. Whether it's the result of natural or man-made disasters, SeaWorld is always on call and often the first to be contacted. We have rescued more than 25,000 animals with the goal of treating and returning them to the wild.

Naturalist Baba Dioum put it best when he said, "In the end we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we have been taught."

At SeaWorld, this has been our calling since we first opened our doors 50 years ago. It is a responsibility we do not take lightly. More than 400 million guests have visited SeaWorld. We are proud that their experiences here have a lasting and positive impact on them, and on the world in which we live.

The truth about SeaWorld is right here in our parks and people. Our guests may enter our gates having never given much thought to the remarkable animals in our oceans. When they leave with a greater appreciation for the importance of the sea, educated about the animals that live there and inspired to make a difference, we have done our job.