

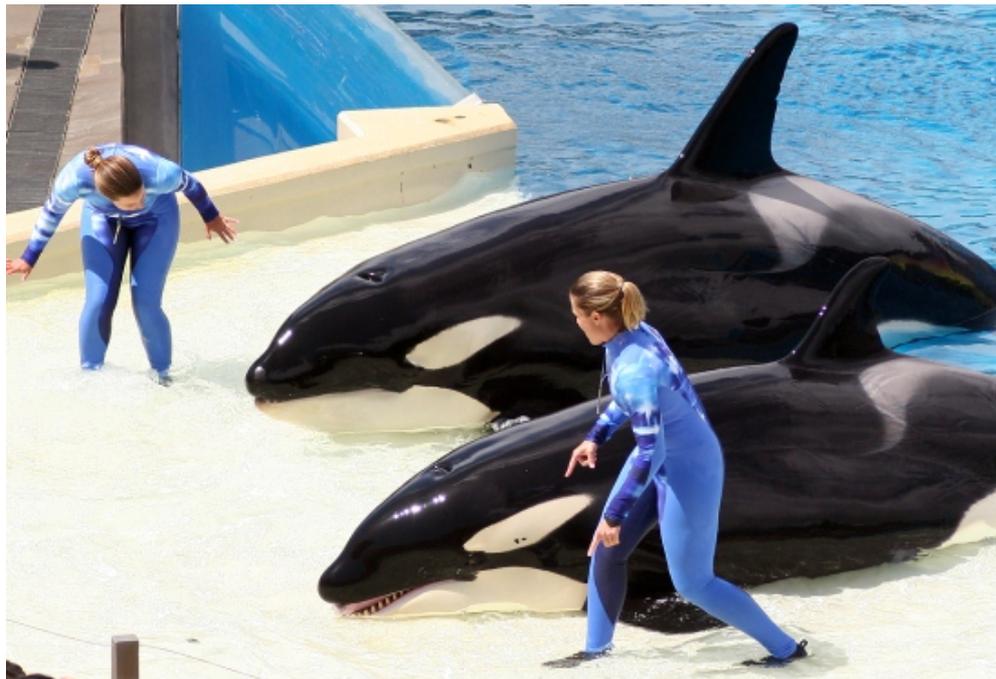


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Events & People

Capturing What You Can't Control

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In the wild, orcas can travel up to 160 km in a single day. In captivity, they are confined to a 14.6m by 3.6m pool (minimum US standards). In the wild, they may live for up to 80 years. In captivity, their average life expectancy is 25-30 years.

The now-famous [#Blackfish documentary](#) highlights the plight of Tillikum - a killer whale living at the SeaWorld Orlando theme park. He has allegedly killed three people to date.

His track record means that he is clearly a danger to the people and the other animals with whom he works- and so he should be released into the wild.

Yet he is kept by SeaWorld in a small tank as, essentially, a sperm bank.

"As any person working in animal husbandry will tell you, the number one rule of animal breeding is that you don't breed from an aggressive animal," said Dr Naomi Rose at a screening of #Blackfish held in the Parliament in Brussels on 19 March 2014. Yet this seems to be precisely what SeaWorld has done.

The film was also shown at Luxembourg on the 15 March and the screenings were part of the [Dolphinaria-Free Europe Conference 2014](#), organised by [Endcap](#).

Samantha Berg, a former killer whale trainer at SeaWorld, told the crowd at the Brussels screening that the SeaWorld trainer who had lost her life to the whale was an experienced animal handler and that her death could have happened to any of the SeaWorld staff.



She spoke about how the conditions under which killer whales are kept at the theme park must cause them undue stress- and about how the life expectancy of a captive killer whale is between 25 and 30 years of age, compared to their life expectancy in the wild (up to 80 years).

In her opinion the only solution is to return Tillikum and all killer whales living in captivity to the wild ocean where they belong.

There are 54 killer whales living in captivity around the world at present. The majority of these are to be found in the US, but French theme park MarineLand Antibes and Spanish Loro Parque (Tenerife) hold 6 captive orcas each.

"Orcas held captive in European aquaria are traded freely with the SeaWorld whales," said marine biologist Dr Ingrid Visser at the screening. "They also cooperate with regards to breeding programmes. This means that Tillikum's genes are running through orcas that are performing in aquaparks worldwide."

The Blackfish documentary has captured the attention of celebrities and many performers have cancelled their shows at SeaWorld since watching the film.

At the end of the day these are huge, wild, predatory animals built for speed, endurance and life in the open ocean. They should not be confined to a small tank.



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