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15 Shocking Images That Prove SeaWorld Should Be Shut Down

[Macee Binns](#) 07.06.17 [Shocking](#)



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Most of us are aware by now of the shocking animal mistreatment that has occurred at the famous ocean theme park, SeaWorld, thanks to the award-winning documentary *Blackfish*, which exposed the darker side of this

popular tourist attraction. *Blackfish* shed light on the animal abuse that occurs within the sea-park industry by telling the story of Tilikum, a killer whale at SeaWorld that has taken the lives of several people during his time in captivity. Since the release of this film in 2013, SeaWorld has been in the news regularly with lawsuits filed against them for unfair practices, and outrage at their mistreatment of animals. A court ruling in the state of California even went as far as to ban SeaWorld from breeding orcas in captivity, and also prevented them from exploiting killer whales in shows for entertainment purposes.

Meanwhile the SeaWorld organization has been busy defending itself to the media, by attempting to discredit the claims of animal abuse, and issuing public statements about the measures they're taking to improve the quality of life for the animals in their parks. They even aired a new ad campaign where they attempted to deflect from the reality of their harmful practices by showing orcas happily interacting with SeaWorld patrons under the tagline "The World Is Changing. SeaWorld is changing too."

But one thing that the famous *Blackfish* documentary, which centered on the abuse of orcas, did not cover is what life is like for the more than 25,000 other animals living in captivity inside this famous ocean-themed park. What about the hundreds of dolphins, seals, penguins, sea lions, turtles, fish, and sharks that currently call the pools of SeaWorld home? What is life in captivity like for them? That is exactly what this article is intended to expose, but be warned the pictures below are not for the faint of heart. So check out 15 Shocking Images That Prove SeaWorld Should Be Shut Down, and if after viewing these images you decide that you would like to get involved then here is a link to PETA's website where you can register to help fight the good fight.

15. SeaWorld's Dolphins Do NOT Come From Rescues



Many of us were led to believe that animals living in aquatic parks were found injured in the wild, where they were rescued, rehabilitated, and sent to live happy pain-free lives in captivity at one of the many SeaWorld parks around the globe, but this is not the case as SeaWorld is NOT an animal rescue. Pictures like the one above depict the highly controversial practice of dolphin drives in Japan, and although SeaWorld no longer obtains animals using this brutal method of capturing, once upon a time they did. SeaWorld used to purchase dolphins from Japan that were trapped into coves and hunted in masses, then the best looking dolphins were kept alive to be sold into captivity for parks to use as attractions. While SeaWorld is smart enough to condemn these drives now, they didn't always. They claim that they rescued dolphins from being killed to put a more positive spin on the practice, but in actuality, they purchased them like any other theme park or entertainment venue from these controversial and brutal dolphin dives. The practice of importing animals into the United States using vendors conducting these drives is now illegal, but many of the whales and dolphins that you see in the SeaWorld parks today are children bred from parents who were captured in this inhumane way.

14. Untimely Deaths Of Animals In Captivity



More than 300 dolphins and whales have died on SeaWorld's watch, and many of them prematurely. Though SeaWorld feigns ignorance, the high number of premature and unusual deaths at animal parks point to a serious common denominator; captivity and SeaWorld's inhumane practices. Let's look at the polar bear Szenja for example. Less than 3 months after PETA urged SeaWorld not to separate polar bears Szenja and Snowflake, SeaWorld did exactly that, and shortly after the separation, one of the bears died. Szenja, the bear left behind alone at SeaWorld's San Diego park, died of a broken heart according to PETA. After losing her companion of 20 years, when SeaWorld shipped Snowflake to the Pittsburgh Zoo in order to breed more polar bears that are miserable in captivity, Szenja did what anyone would do when they lose all hope: she gave up. This should be a wake-up call to SeaWorld to stop breeding and shipping animals around, close the animal exhibits, and retire the animals to sanctuaries. Until it does, this ship will keep sinking.

13. Forced To Perform



Stage fright is one of the most common fears amongst men and women across the lands. Standing in front of a crowd, with all eyes on you, can be intimidating to say the least. Now imagine that you are an animal being forced to perform in front of hundreds of loud screaming people every day. People who are clapping and chanting in a language that you do not understand, and if you mess up the routine that you're forced to perform then food will be withheld from you. That's what life is like for the sea lions and seals performing at SeaWorld everyday. Intelligent marine mammals like sea lions belong free in the ocean – their natural environment – not on stages performing senseless tricks in front of noisy frightening crowds. Trainers condition sea lions, dolphins, whales and other captive marine animals to perform in order to receive food. So this is not fun for them, like SeaWorld leads you to believe, it's about survival! Can you imagine having to do tricks in order to eat everyday? This is just another form of animal cruelty practiced by this horrible organization.

12. Injuries And Aggression



Dolphins are among the most intelligent species on the planet. They are highly sociable mammals that seem to show empathic, cooperative, and altruistic behaviors. So you can imagine how frustrated these highly intelligent mammals become when they are forced to live in pools that are too small to stimulate their brains and exercise their complex social structures. Although typically peaceful creatures in the wild, dolphins will show aggression and assert their dominance over other weaker animals when held in captivity through biting, chasing, and striking their tails against the surface of the water. Images These highly intelligent animals are smart enough to know that life in captivity is not natural, and spending their days trapped in prison tanks at SeaWorld is no way for these beautiful creatures to live.

11. Animal Sunburns Painted Over With Zinc Oxide



Orcas at SeaWorld spend most of their time floating lifelessly at the surface of the water with little to no shade from the hot blistering sun. In the wild, orcas spend up to 95 percent of their time submerged and would find

shade in the depths of the ocean, but at SeaWorld their tanks are far too shallow. Their largest tank is 40 feet deep—not nearly deep enough to give them a relief from the harsh elements. Because of this, orcas have perpetual sunburns, which are shielded from the public’s eye with the help of black zinc oxide, which is painted on to match their skin. Although zinc oxide is also used as a sunblock, orcas almost always have painful sunburns despite the application of this injury camouflaging sunscreen. This is just another example of how these marine animals are not meant for life in captivity.

10. Dolphins With Skin Conditions



Marine life veterinarian Dr. Heather Rally visited SeaWorld San Diego in 2014, and according to the PETA website, her observations revealed that orcas aren't the only animals suffering at SeaWorld. Many of the dolphins had developed a skin condition called dolphin pox. A study published in the *Canadian Journal of Comparative Medicine* found that stress and environmental conditions appear to play a major role in the manifestation of dolphin pox. Despite their obvious skin condition, the dolphins were still expected to interact with park guests. "The dolphins involved in human interaction activities had obvious skin lesions," said Dr. Rally in regards her visit. "These pox-like lesions could be easily seen on many of the dolphins at SeaWorld San Diego, yet visitors were still allowed in the water and often sat unsupervised by the side of the pool, putting their hands in the water and touching the dolphins." This skin infection can be painful for the dolphins that were being stroked by

untrained park guests, and it can also be a health hazard for the people who came into contact with the infected animals.

9. Forced Breeding



Though SeaWorld finally ended its controversial orca-breeding program, thanks to immense public pressure and a California law that made it illegal to breed orcas in captivity— this did nothing for the hundreds of dolphins and other whales who continue to be forcibly bred in captivity. According to former trainer John Hargrove, male dolphins at SeaWorld are forcibly masturbated with practices similar to the controversial orca-breeding program, and it was reported by SeaWorld vice president Todd Robeck, that staff members regularly artificially inseminate bottlenose dolphins (that are currently imprisoned at SeaWorld). They first drug the female dolphins with sedatives and remove them from the water so they can't fight back. Then they shove endoscopes (cameras and tubes filled with semen) into the dolphin's uterus, which sounds awfully rape-ish if you ask me. SeaWorld's breeding practices often lead to heartbreaking stories of separation, and sometimes even death. A case in point is Ruby, a beluga whale who was repeatedly impregnated while at SeaWorld, even after she attacked and killed her first calf in 2008. Ruby miscarried her third pregnancy, and afterward her kidneys shut down. She died in 2014 as a result. Poor Ruby!

8. Separation



Dolphins, belugas, and other whales are highly social animals that live alongside their families for many years in the wild, if not their entire lives. But at SeaWorld, these animals are often forced to breed and then the babies are frequently torn away from their families at a young age. This affects the young animals physical, social, and psychological development, and causes great stress, anxiety, and depression for the moms that are left constantly searching for their babies after they're taken away. In an interview with NPR's Fresh Air, former SeaWorld trainer John Hargrove explained the tragic separation of orca Kasatka and her calf, Takara. Hargrove said, "In fact, [when Takara was taken from Kasatka], she was emitting vocalizations that had never been heard before... ever...by anyone ... obviously Takara was gone and Kasatka was trying anything she could to try to locate and communicate with Takara, which is absolutely heartbreaking. Those vocalizations continued on for a long time." It is absolutely heartbreaking, you should be ashamed SeaWorld!

7. Child Attacked By A Dolphin





Not many people can say that they have been bitten by a dolphin, but that's what captivity does to otherwise friendly animals. While visiting SeaWorld Orlando, a young girl participating in the dolphin-feeding program held up a tray of fish and the dolphin bit her hand, then ate the fish – tray and all. The girl received only minor injuries from the bite, but the experience was definitely frightening for her and everyone who witnessed the attack. Looks like the little guy was tired of having his food taken away from him, which is a common form of punishment for animals in training at SeaWorld. The video went viral on YouTube and received a great deal of national attention. So much so that the Orlando SeaWorld location stopped the feeding portion of its dolphin encounter. Although one could argue that they need to up the feeding portions for these animals or the poor little dolphin wouldn't be eating trays.

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6. Bullying Is Common Inside Tiny Tanks



When whales and dolphins are held in captivity, the stress of being confined to tiny tanks results in aggression. The most common injuries are rake marks that form when the teeth of dominant whales and dolphins scrape the skin of the less aggressive animals. These attacks can result in painful and serious injuries like the one pictured

above. According to marine life veterinarian Dr. Rally, “When dolphins and orcas are held in captivity, aggressive dominance hierarchies are a common occurrence.” At SeaWorld, the animals cannot simply separate themselves to diffuse a situation, and when an aggressive attack breaks out, there is nowhere for the animals to escape. Which is how this orca, who reportedly tried to flee during an attack, ended up with this gruesome and painful injury.

5. Trainer Attacks



Adult female killer whale Kasatka attacked veteran trainer Ken Peters, during a live show at SeaWorld San Diego in 2006. Peters, who was swimming in the water with Kasatka, was grabbed by his foot and dragged to the bottom of the pool where the whale held him under water for close to a minute before bringing him back up to the surface for air. The whale kept hold of Ken's foot for several minutes, toying with him at the surface, while Ken calmly stroked the whales head until she took him under again. At the end of this close to fifteen-minute attack, Kasatka eventually let him go, and Ken raced to get out of the pool falling on his broken foot as he scrambled to safety. The incident reportedly came after Kasatka's young calf began crying out from a tank in the backstage area of the arena. By all indications, Kasatka was feeling irritated and wanted nothing to do with the show, but was forced to perform anyway. This is just one of many trainer injuries that SeaWorld would prefer no one ever knew about.

4. Depression



Orcas in the wild create strong family bonds and swim up to 100 miles a day. At SeaWorld, they are forced to perform unnatural tricks and swim in endless circles all day everyday. Captive orcas at SeaWorld would need to swim 1,900 laps around the tiny tanks they are confined to in order to swim the same distance that orcas in the wild typically do each day. Many of SeaWorld's orcas, like Tilikum who was featured in the *Blackfish* documentary, can often be seen listlessly floating at the top of their tanks or on the tank floor, sometimes for hours on end. While SeaWorld would have you believe that their whales are just taking naps, floating is hardly a normal behavior for wild orcas. "One of the most distinct characteristics of captive whales versus wild ones is their tendency to log [float in place]," Naomi Rose, a marine mammal scientist at the Animal Welfare Institute explains. It's believed to be the result of chronic stress, boredom, and inhibition of natural behaviors that occurs as a result of inadequate living conditions at places like SeaWorld. Their large bodies are built for constant movement, and the floating behavior means that many of SeaWorld's orcas are far less fit than their wild counterparts- which isn't good for their physical or mental health.

3. Unbearable Living Conditions





Animals at SeaWorld are often housed either in isolation or in incompatible groups. They are frequently shipped to and from various parks, and relocated to different small tanks often. These inconsistent and unnatural housing situations can result in injuries and stress. One example of this is Nanuq, a beluga whale who was held captive at SeaWorld Orlando. In the wild, belugas are social animals and communicate with each other using a language of clicks, whistles, and clangs. But in 1990, when Nanuq was just 6 years old, he was torn away from his pod in the waters of Manitoba, Canada. This sensitive and intelligent whale was shipped between various SeaWorld parks five times, where he was used for breeding and to entertain visitors at the park's Beluga Interaction Program. Nanuq died in March of 2015 while being treated by SeaWorld veterinarians for an infection from a jaw injury that he sustained during an "interaction" with two other whales, which was probably a direct result of being forced into an incompatible group in a small confined space with no escape.

2. Deaths





There have been several attacks on trainers at SeaWorld that lead to serious injury, and even deaths in some cases, that SeaWorld has gone to great lengths to try to keep out of the media spotlight. SeaWorld senior trainer, Dawn Brancheau, began her “Dine With Shamu” show on February 24, 2010, just as she had many times before, but this particular show included a gruesome finale that would end Dawn’s life and leave her lifeless body without an arm. Dawn Brancheau was declared dead shortly after the attack, but still, seven years later, SeaWorld claims no responsibility for the vicious incident. Over the years, a number of injuries and deaths have occurred to trainers that work at SeaWorld. The highly publicized attack on Dawn, which occurred in front of a live audience, was the incident that sparked the famous *Blackfish* documentary exposing the SeaWorld company for its many inhumane and negligent practices.

1. Unhealthy Animals





Captive animals are deprived of everything that is natural and important to them, and they often experience captivity-related health problems as a result. Meet Obie the Walrus. Obie was confined to a tiny tank at SeaWorld that was covered with a thin layer of green algae. He suffers from psychological distress, boredom, and displayed this by pressing his mouth against the glass and repeatedly regurgitating and swallowing his food for hours on end. This is a behavior that is not seen in the wild, but it is a common neurotic behavior in captive wild animals. “Obie suffers from blindness and most likely has experienced chronic irritation of the mucous membranes of his eyes,” Dr. Heather Rally, a veterinarian who has experience working with marine mammals, tells PETA. He held both eyelids closed 90 percent of the time when she observed him at the San Diego SeaWorld park, indicating that his eyes were causing him constant physical discomfort. You can tell by this picture of Obie that being trapped in captivity is no way to live, as he appears to be spending his time on this earth fighting extreme boredom, depression, and captivity related health problems. How could you do this to Obie, SeaWorld, how?

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