

RWS and dolphins



A bottlenose dolphin at sea.
[Photo: NASA

Marine mammals often do not do well in captivity. SHAMEEN IDICULLA reports.

The dolphins we see performing at shows may look like they are smiling and having fun. “But they are not,” states Singapore’s animal rights group ACRES. “Their mouth is just shaped in a way that we humans **misinterpret** as a smile...Visitors to marine aquariums often fail to see that the dolphins there had to have been ripped from their natural ocean environments, snatched away from their family and pod mates, held in nets, carried in trucks, hoisted into planes and flown for hours.”

This was probably the case for more than 20 bottlenose dolphins currently at Resorts World Sentosa (RWS). They were brought here from the Solomon Islands to be a part of the Dolphin Island attraction. Today, visitors can choose from various programmes to meet and interact with these animals. RWS hopes that such activities will give people “a deeper understanding of marine life”. It says it is giving its dolphins the best possible care.

However, not everyone agrees that these marine mammals are fine. Critics argue that dolphins treated this way are often left **traumatised**. They are intelligent creatures who, like humans, feel emotions. They are sad to be separated from their families. They get bored when confined to small tanks. They get stressed when they

have to constantly interact with human beings. They can become weak and ill, and often do not survive for long.

Four dolphins bought by Resorts World Sentosa have already died. A video uploaded to social media in December 2019 showed a captive dolphin repeatedly banging its head against the wall of its tank. Hence, several animal rights groups have been campaigning for the dolphins to be released back into the wild.

“In a world where so much that is wild and free has already been lost to us, we must leave these beautiful animals free to swim as they will and must,” said dolphin-activist Mr Ric O’Barry. “They do us no harm and wish us none, and we should let them alone.”

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VOCAB BUILDER

misinterpret (say ‘mis-in-ter-pret’; verb) = misunderstand.

traumatised (say ‘tro-me-taiz’d’; adjective) = severely shocked and disturbed, with long-lasting pain.