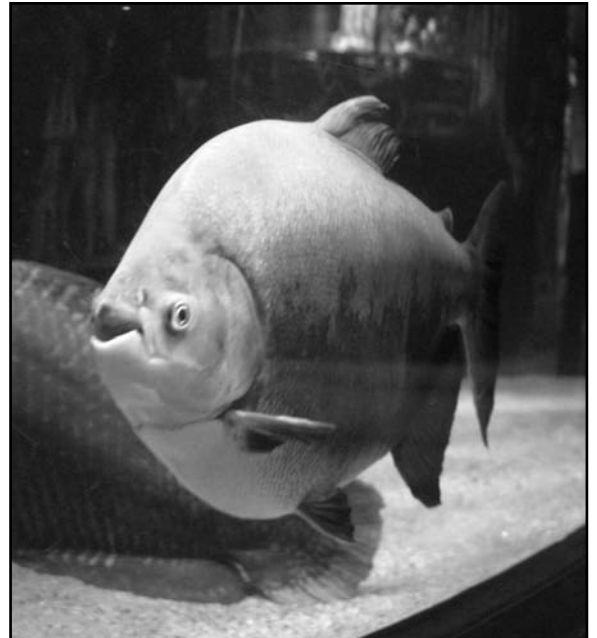


WHAT ARE AQUARIA?



An aquarium is a collection of aquatic animals held captive and put on display in a tank or a pool to entertain and amuse the public. Approximately 40,000 animals are kept in UK aquaria. These include starfish, rays, dogfish, eels, seahorses, octopuses, terrapins, crabs, sea urchins, puffer fish and sharks.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH AQUARIA?

A recent study by the Captive Animals Protection Society (CAPS) found that 89% of the animals in UK aquaria are captured from the wild.



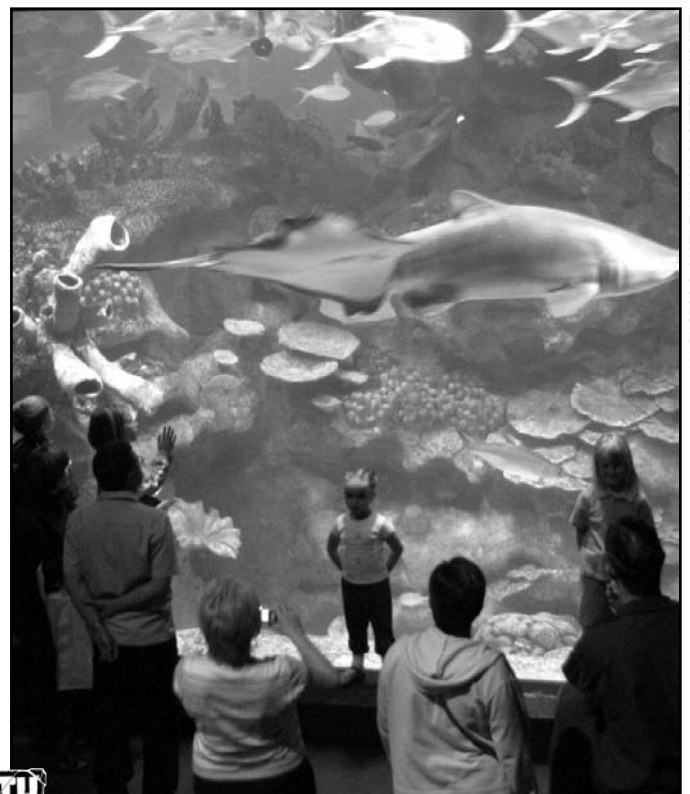
Aquaria take animals from their natural environment and imprison them for the entertainment of people, in order to make money. Captured animals no longer have the freedom of movement and interaction with other animals that they have in the wild. Animals taken from coral reefs to be displayed in aquaria are often stunned for capture with chemicals such as cyanide, resulting in a high death rate in both the target species and other animals living nearby in the reef. A recent study in Indonesia showed that between 49% and 80% of animals died in transit, and that 70% of reef fish imported to the UK die within a year, from stress and disease. Even when the animals are born in captivity, keeping them in tanks prevents them from living their lives and behaving as they would naturally.

The near-constant attention from visitors, lack of hiding places in tanks, regulated feeding times and handling of some species by aquaria visitors all amount to a stressful environment for the captive animals.

The psychological effects of captivity

Just like animals kept in cages, aquatic animals suffer psychologically from boredom and frustration. This is demonstrated by 'stereotypic behaviours', which are repetitive movements that perform no obvious function.

The CAPS investigation of UK aquaria found that 90% contained animals exhibiting stereotypic behaviours, including spiralling, circling or continual attempts to swim through glass tank walls.



ALL PHOTOS © CAPTIVE ANIMAL PROTECTION SOCIETY



MISHANDLING OFTEN CAUSES INJURY



The physical effects of captivity

Researchers found that many animals in UK aquaria suffer from health problems such as wounds, eye diseases, infections and growths.

The majority of aquaria allow the public to handle certain animals in 'touch pools'. Mishandling often causes injury when animals are prodded or dropped into the water from a great height.

Crushed cockleshell is often used on the floors of tanks. Rays naturally lie buried in the sand on the seabed but the sharp pieces of broken shell used in aquaria often cut their skin as they try to bury themselves.

Aren't aquaria involved with conservation?

Like zoos, most aquaria claim that they are involved in conservation. However, also as with zoos, this argument does not stand up to scrutiny.

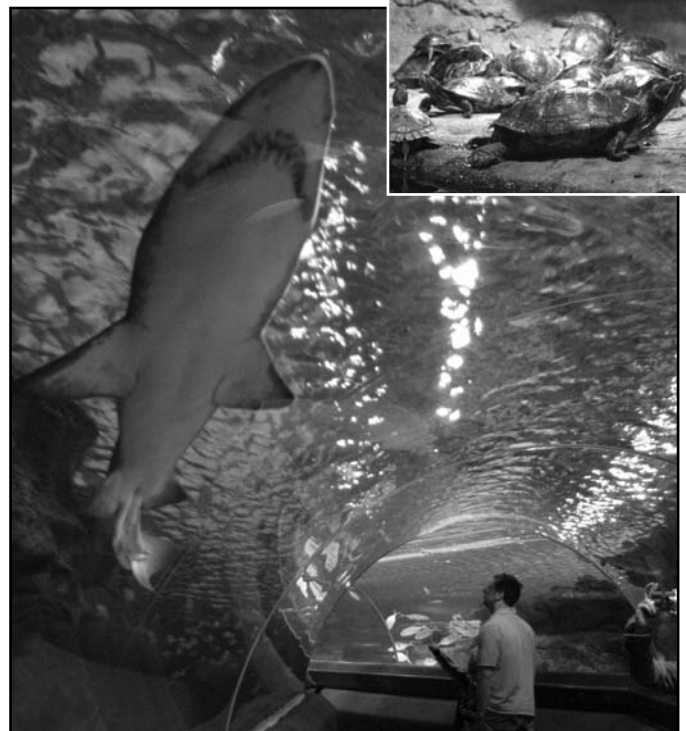
Stealing animals from their natural habitats is no way to conserve them! All tropical reefs are threatened environments, and there is no justification for taking animals from them. Some aquaria have started to breed rare tropical fish, to boost numbers of the species. But they would not have to do this had they not taken so many of those fish in the first place! The most effective form of conservation is to preserve the habitats where animals live.

More than half the restaurants in UK aquaria have threatened species of fish, such as cod, on the menu!

Aren't aquaria educational?

Different species that would never co-exist in the wild are often kept together in aquaria. Some are kept in dirty, near-barren tanks. This does nothing to educate the public about the species' natural habitats or ecosystems. Researchers from CAPS found that in the aquarium they investigated with the most species on display (130 in total), 'none [of the animals were] in their natural habitat, most of them were not doing what they normally do in the wild and some of them were doing things they certainly never would do in "real life".' (*'Suffering Deep Down'* – CAPS report 2004).

ANIMALS CANNOT ESCAPE FROM GAWPING VISITORS



WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?

If you want to see wildlife, why not go for a walk in the countryside? To learn about aquatic life, why not get hold of a copy of the amazing BBC series *'The Blue Planet'* on DVD, which features approximately 300 species of aquatic animals all filmed in their natural habitats? There's also loads of info about marine life on the Internet, so you can study it without harming animals! For more detailed information, see the CAPS report *'Suffering Deep Down'* online at <http://www.captiveanimals.org>

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Find out more about aquaria. Check out www.youth4animals.com and www.captiveanimals.org
- Don't visit aquaria or marine parks when on holiday, and encourage your friends, family and school to avoid them as well.
- Join Animal Aid's youth group, Youth4Animals, and help campaign against aquaria.

For more information on animal issues, please contact: Animal Aid, The Old Chapel, Bradford St, Tonbridge, TN9 1AW
Tel: 01732 364546 • www.animalaid.org.uk • www.youth4animals.com • email: info@youth4animals.com