

11/14/12

Gmail - FW: Some questions for Shamu...



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**FW: Some questions for Shamu...**

1 message

Wed, Nov 14, 2012 at 5:15 PM

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

> Subject: RE: Some questions for Shamu...  
> Date: Wed, 29 Nov 2006 09:14:23 -0500  
> From: Ask.Shamu@SeaWorld.com  
> To: [REDACTED]  
>  
> Thanks for the message, [REDACTED] That's a lot of questions--let's see if we could  
> answer them all.  
>  
> The whales do not eat things like rubber strips if they peel them. They are  
> playful animals and they like to peel and pull on things, but no, they do not  
> consume such things.  
>  
> They do not "regurgitate" their food as your friend thought she observed-- i.e.  
> they do not swallow it to their stomachs and force it out again. They may play  
> with some bits of their food, suck in into their mouths and spit and out, but  
> that is not regurgitating. Again, it's a playful thing that they do from time to  
> time.  
>  
> Katrin, no one knows how long killer whales live. Sure, there are some people  
> who claim killer whales live 80, 90 even 100 years old, but it is important to  
> note that such claims are not backed by any scientifically documented evidence  
> as far as we know. To learn what scientific evidence we do know about killer  
> whale longevity, check out our web site at  
> <http://www.seaworld.org/animal-info/info-books/killer-whale/longevity.htm>.  
>  
> Killer whale dorsal fins come in all shapes and sizes. In fact, their fins vary  
> so much that the dorsal fins are used by researchers to identify individual  
> killer whales just like a finger prints identify humans.  
>  
> Although movies make it seem that only whales in zoos have bent fins, this is  
> far from the truth. SeaWorld has killer whales that have both straight and bent  
> fins, the same as in the wild. In fact, I. N. Visser has recently studied wild  
> killer whales by New Zealand and documented that 23% of males had bent fins  
> (Aquatic Animals 24(2): 71-81).  
>  
> Why do whales in both zoos and in the wild sometimes develop bent fins? No one  
> is exactly sure, but it may have to do with genetics and/or because the fins can  
> sometimes reach six feet in length with no hard bones or muscles to support it.  
>  
> There is no evidence that recreating the whole ocean environment (including the  
> sounds and so on) would somehow be beneficial to our whales. Humans, for  
> example, do not need an entire forest environment for us to survive and  
> thrive--we don't need the sounds of the outdoor piped into our work spaces and

[REDACTED]

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> homes to do well. Cats and dogs don't need such things to thrive under our care,  
> horses don't and so on. What we do instead is set up an environment where they  
> thrive under our care.  
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> Our research, in general, is not available for people outside the zoological  
> society to read and review. Although we do an extensive amount of research there  
> is little we can directly point you to. You can check out some of our research  
> projects at [www.hswrl.org](http://www.hswrl.org) to start, and you may be interested in the huge  
> artificial insemination breeding program information we have posted at  
> <http://www.bioreprod.org/cgi/rapidpdf/bioreprod.104.027961v1.pdf>.  
>  
> We hope this helps!  
>  
> Sincerely,  
>  
> Ask Shamu Team  
>  
>  
>  
>

> —Original Message—

> From: [REDACTED]  
> Sent: Wednesday, November 29, 2006 6:47 AM  
> To: SWF-Ask Shamu  
> Subject: Some questions for Shamu...

> Hello,  
> I have some questions, mainly concerning orcas as they are one of my  
> favourite animals and hope you would be so kind to answer them for me!  
> I heard you were the number one authority in orca research, I would like to  
> learn in more detail about this fascinating species, what type of research  
> are you carrying out at the park and in what journals can I find the papers  
> produced? I'm aware you sponsor some research outside of the park but I have  
> already looked into that so now I would like to learn more about the  
> research carried out inside the park.  
> I read a paper a while ago on the lifespan of wild orcas and I was astounded  
> to see that for females the numbers quoted varied from 80-90 years. Is the  
> life span for captive orcas shorter as I was told at your parks that it  
> varies between 20 to 30 years? Why is that?  
> Furthermore I am slightly confused about the flopped over dorsal fin. In  
> your FAQ it says it could be either genetic as it occurs quite regularly in  
> the wild or due to the collagen softening because the animals spend a long  
> time at the surface. If I'm correctly informed most of Seaworld's orcas come  
> or a descendent from animals that were taken from Iceland or British  
> Columbia rather than New Zealand where there is apparently a population  
> which have flopped fins). I have special interest in the orca population in  
> British Columbia and have not seen or read about a single animal that has a  
> flopped dorsal fin, the same goes for the Icelandic population. This makes me  
> doubt the genetics theory, especially since this rather rare genetic  
> condition would have occurred in unrelated individuals independently. Do you  
> have any links to papers or pictures of animals from these habitats with  
> flopped fins?  
> The softened collagen theory seems the more likely option however as this  
> condition has not as far as I am informed been observed in the British  
> Columbia population I was wondering whether this may indicate that their  
> captive habitat may restrict their natural behaviour, thus resulting in them  
> spending more time at the surface and their dorsal fins flopping?  
> As I am currently doing a university project on enrichment in zoo animals I  
> would be very much interested to hear about the enrichment techniques in  
> place, especially in the cetacean tanks. The ocean environment is extremely  
> complex and I would be intrigued to learn more about how you go about  
> recreating this unique environment. I would especially be interested in how

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> you go about reproducing or substituting the complex and stimulating world  
> of sounds in which cetaceans live in the wild as this is undoubtedly a  
> major part of their lives.  
> Also, a friend of mine who participates in SeaWorld camps mentioned some odd  
> things to me a while ago;  
> She noticed that the orcas were peeling the rubber of their tank, why do  
> they do that and does this not present a health risk if they swallow it?  
> She also noticed that they seemed to regurgitate their food and then eat it  
> again, why do they do that? Is it a natural behaviour and does the acid that  
> they regurgitate with that not wear down their teeth (as is the case in  
> people suffering from bulimia)?  
> Thank you for taking time to answer these questions, I am sure you are very  
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