

TAIJI TALKING POINTS

- Last season, 106 dolphins were captured for sale, while 614 dolphins were slaughtered. The overall numbers are declining, but it may be because of climate change affecting the migratory route, bad weather, or over-hunting.
- The hunts are protected by national and international law. Under international law, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) has explicitly held they will not regulate “small cetaceans” like the species targeted in Taiji. In fact, commercial law protects the right to hunt up to 200 miles off the coast. (Being in “international waters” 12 miles away does not mean we are free from jurisdiction.)
- The Japanese government agency (Japan Fisheries Agency) authorizes the hunts and provides an annual nationwide and regional quota for the hunting of dolphins and whales. These quotas are subject to change, with the addition of new species or revision of quota numbers mid-season, as observed in the 2017/18 season. Juveniles who are returned to the sea without their mothers are not counted in the quota, though they have little chance of survival on their own.
- Species targeted in Taiji include:
 - Bottlenose dolphins: most popular for live capture
 - Striped dolphins
 - Pantropical spotted dolphins
 - Risso’s dolphins
 - Pacific white-sided dolphins
 - Short-finned pilot whales
 - False killer whales
 - Rough-toothed dolphins
 - Melon-headed whales
- The species involved are not “endangered” or at risk of going extinct, at least according to the IUCN Red List, which is the international standard for identifying at-risk species. However, that does not mean that those species are not at risk of localized extinction. We do not know whether, or how accurately, the Fisheries Agency documents species numbers, or if they have ever done a population study on the species captured and killed in Taiji.
- The fishermen who take part in the hunts are a small association/union, supported by the town’s government. As indicated by the mayor of Taiji, the town is working to build a large captive entertainment complex, with a water park and self-sustaining breeding program.
- Taiji is a traditional whaling community, but in a different sense. In the past, the villagers would hunt a single large whale using wooden boats that were paddled from shore. It would take many people to capture a single whale, and the entire village would partake. This is very different than having a fleet of motorized boats that round up dozens or hundreds of dolphins at once. Town documents indicate that drive hunting did not begin in Taiji until the late 1960s.
- The dolphins continue to pass by Taiji because they are following the Kuroshio current, which serves as a migratory path for many species. Dolphins and whales feed on the fish and invertebrate species that travel along this warm water current, as they have done for generations. Changing their travel route or feeding territory is not feasible.

- We cannot put sound devices in the water to warn the dolphins. Our team is monitored by police and the coast guard constantly in Taiji. If we were observed putting an object in the water, it would be removed immediately, and we would likely be arrested and deported from the country. There is also no way to know whether a sound device would succeed.
- We do not attempt to cut the nets, because (1) it is illegal—our objective is to lawfully document and educate, (2) we have seen in the past that the dolphins are unsure what to do in that instance, and would likely remain in the area (or near their family), and (3) it is likely the hunters would round up any attempting to escape and re-capture them immediately. Many species of dolphins such as pilot whales have been observed remaining around the killing cove, unwilling to leave their families, even if escape were possible.
- Nets do not exist in the wild, so the dolphins do not understand that the open ocean is on the other side – they rarely attempt to jump or swim over them. When dolphins are netted in the cove, there are usually three sets of nets preventing escape, making it even less likely they would jump all the nets. After being chased into the cove, the dolphins are exhausted and panicked, so they would be easily re-captured.
- A dead dolphin’s meat typically sells for several hundred dollars. A live dolphin may be sold for tens of thousands of dollars. The highest confirmed figure is \$154,000 USD.
- The local and national governments have tried to encourage dolphin and whale meat consumption, despite the fact that large species like dolphins, whales and tuna contain dangerous levels of toxins such as mercury, PCBs and other chemicals, which can be harmful if consumed in large amounts. The hunting in Taiji is not considered subsistence fishing or done out of necessity, as most people in the area or country do not eat dolphin meat, and they sell live dolphins abroad commercially.
- Live dolphins are often sold to marine parks within Japan, though many have also been transported to China in recent years. In the past, Taiji dolphins have been sold to aquariums in the Middle East, Singapore, Mexico, Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, and Russia.
- Japanese citizens have little knowledge about the hunts. Many in larger cities do not know where Taiji is, and do not know the hunts take place at all. Others do know about them, but it is an unpopular issue. The media in Japan is not neutral, and activists are labeled as foreign terrorists who are interfering in their country’s legal activities. The public is generally not receptive to learning about the issue from outsiders or getting involved in activism efforts. Local activists are sometimes criticized, harassed, and threatened for speaking out against the hunts.
- Each season the fishermen’s union in Taiji receives “orders” or requests for specific species from marine parks. The hunters can only afford to continue the hunts because of the financial incentive from the captivity industry, as the demand for dolphin meat keeps declining. **This is why education and awareness are critical—demand for captive entertainment is a key motivator for the continuation of the Taiji slaughter.**

What is the solution? As explained above, the Taiji drive hunts are complicated, and the law is not in our favor. The most effective thing individuals can do is to [say NO to all forms of dolphin entertainment](#), such as swim with dolphin experiences and marine parks. We know the effect that consumer opinion has on these facilities (see SeaWorld’s recent history), and we know that educating others is having a huge impact on the captive entertainment industry.

For more information, please visit our [Taiji FAQ page](#).