

Affiliation/Position	Primate Research Institute/D1/L3
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1. Country/location of visit
Kyoto, Japan
2. Research project
'The Cove' and 'Behind The Cove' documentary screenings and discussion (Conserv'Session)
3. Date (departing from/returning to Japan)
2017. 06. 03 - 2017. 06. 03 (one day)
4. Main host researcher and affiliation
Ms Yagi (movie director), Cécile Sarabian (PRI), Dr. Fumitaka Wakamatsu (Kyoto University)
5. Progress and results of your research/activity

During our Conserv'Session at the Seminar House, North Yoshida Campus at Kyoto University we had the opportunity to watch 2 documentaries regarding whale hunting in Japan. This was followed by a student led discussion from the Wildlife Research Center and Primate Research Institute from Kyoto University. The event was highly advertised locally and it was also open to the general public.



Firstly, we saw *The Cove*, directed by L. Psihoyos, which tells the story of R. O' Barry, a former dolphin trainer for the TV show "Flipper", who has the dedicated most of the past decades to the freedom and conservation of captive dolphins, after a successful career working for companies such as Sea World capturing and training wild dolphins. The documentary narrates how Psihoyos followed O' Barry's new mission that aimed to record the slaughter of dolphins that occur every year in Taiji Japan, in order to present it to the world. Other arguments presented was the capture of wild dolphins to sell them to sea parks/aquariums around the world, the distribution of the meat to children in the area which is highly

contaminated by mercury and other potentially harmful chemicals. The second movie was "Behind the Cove-the quiet Japanese speak out-" directed by K. Yagi as a response to the movie "The Cove". The movie followed the director's journey back to the site of Taiji, where she spoke to the government officials, fishermen, and other local people that were interviewed in the first movie we saw and discussed what implications the movie "The Cove" had to the local community and the potential view of Japanese people to the international community. The movie started as a response to "The Cove" but it quickly moved from dolphin hunting to the long history of whale hunting and whale meat consumption culture in Japan. Both movies had very interesting points of view, they were fun to watch, and led to a very interesting discussion afterwards. However, in my opinion, both movies did not accurately accomplish what I thought were their original main goals and I will try to explain why.

It was my second time watching "The Cove", and this time around, its effect on me was a little different. Although arguably it may be due to the fact that I have been living in Japan for a few years now, or the fact that I could look at it more objectively, now that I was aware of the inhumane slaughter of dolphins, but I believe in the end the movie might have done more damage than good for the cause of saving dolphins from being sold for captivity or being consumed worldwide. Perhaps in order to create a bigger impact factor, I think the mainly North American movie crew, infiltrating a local

Japanese fishery community, and exposing inhumane practices in the killing of dolphins deliberately re-opened wounds between two nations that have had many serious confrontations in the past century. The movie definitely created awareness, but it may have created a more objective international awareness had it also used numbers, scientific facts, and history around the world regarding dolphins and whales. Although I do not agree with killing dolphins for any purposes, it did not address where these dolphins are headed. It did say the real money maker for the industry is capturing them from the wild to sell them to aquariums, but which who are the consumers, the which are most likely the root of the problem? Even if they stop Taiji, if the market still exists, would we not expect another country to take over? Attacking the root of the problem, the big companies such as Sea World, and collaborating with local Japanese “insiders” that could potentially get more of the consumer information, would have been more fruitful and insightful for the cause of saving the cetaceans, especially with the history between USA and Japan.

It was my first time watching “Behind the Cove” movie and I would say I was equally disappointed overall. The movie did have interesting facts about whaling history in Japan, the misconstrued facts showed in the other movie, but rather than moving away from a passive-aggressive approach to deal with the same sensitive issue, it decided to use the same methods of anecdotal emotional stories, hardly using any numbers or science behind the issue of conservation (how they might not be as bad as they say), or how potentially their consumption or way of slaughtering might not be the worst in the world. Half way during the movie, I was feeling uncomfortable as a foreigner in Japan because most of the people interviewed in it had very negative thoughts towards foreigners. I think it did itself a disservice by portraying Japan as a victim rather than clarifying any misleading information and taking ownership of old customs that will most likely die out anyway. In the end, capturing cetaceans for aquariums and parks seems to be the big drive to keep this industry going, and both films failed to get to the root of the problem and it was full of “blaming games” between two great nations that have an important socio-economic role in the world.

I really enjoyed the debate afterwards and the questions that audience were asked. Before the screening of both movies, the people were asked if they were 1) pro-cetacean hunting for consumption, 2) undecided, 3) completely against the hunt. In the end, many of the older Japanese crowd was pro-hunt, some older Japanese and Japanese students were undecided, and many young Japanese and most of foreigners were against the hunt and consumption overall.

In my point of view, rather than blaming other countries and calling them out on cultural/business practices that they disagree on, people should work together rather than fight each other. One country dominating and imposing a point of view over another, might actually create an opposite effect. People in the receiving end might consume more or hunt more out of spite, defending horrible practices as cultural traditions. If at all possible, more cooperative ways to tackle environmental, conservation and social-economic problems should be tried before drastic and dominating measures over another country. This is by no means a justification for allowing such cruel and outdated practices to continue, but in my opinion, more diplomatic approaches were doable and not attempted to create fame and create a bigger impact on both movies. I enjoyed the debate and I am thankful to all the organizers and speakers that made it possible.

I am looking forward to our next Conserv’Session!
