

Japan urged to end cruel dolphin hunts

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An international consortium of scientists is organizing a campaign to halt the annual Japanese dolphin hunts that are said to be extremely cruel.

The "Act for Dolphins" campaign seeks to end the practices by appealing to the Japanese government.

Occurring annually between September and April, Japanese fishermen herd hundreds of dolphins and small cetaceans into shallow bays by banging on partially submerged rods that create a sonic barrier.

The dolphins are corralled into nets and then speared, hooked, hoisted into the air by their tails and eviscerated. The methods, say researchers, result in a long and painful death for the intelligent marine mammals.

The Japanese government claims the animals compete with local fishermen for limited supplies of fish and that the drives are a means of pest control.

In addition to dolphins, the hunt includes species listed as threatened by the World Conservation Union, the consortium said.

The "Act for Dolphins" campaign involves scientists from the New York Aquarium, Emory University, the University of San Diego, Dalhousie University, the University of Hawaii, the University of Notre Dame, and professionals from the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

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