

Taiji

FAQs

Why do they hunt dolphins?

Japan is an island country, so they have relied on the ocean as a food source for a long time. In addition to fish, they have also hunted whales for food in the past. Because there has been so much fishing, there is concern that they will run out of supply. Dolphin hunting began in the late 1960s, and it provides a food source. In addition, some hunters believe that dolphins are “pests” who eat all of their fish, so they think that killing them will help increase the amount of fish they catch.

Is it tradition?

Taiji has been a whaling village for several centuries. However, whaling was traditionally done by the entire village rowing wooden boats out to sea in hopes of catching a single large whale. They would then divide the meat among everyone in town. They would only hunt a few whales a year this way. When done that way, it is a much more sustainable practice. With the dolphin hunting we see today, there is a fleet of motorized boats that round up dozens or even hundreds of dolphins at a time. This has a much bigger impact on species population, since dolphins do not reproduce that frequently and only have 1 calf at a time.

Do they need dolphin meat to survive?

Dolphin meat is not a very popular food item in Japan. It is considered more of a regional specialty (sort of like pickled pig ears in the US), and many people actually find the meat to be bad-tasting. So it is not a food source that they need to survive, and it is not considered subsistence fishing since they often do not eat the meat.

Why don't the police stop the hunters?

The police are actually there to protect the hunters! The hunts are legal, and the government actually provides the quota and permits for the hunts.

Why doesn't someone stop the hunters or free the dolphins?

Because the hunts are legal commercial activity, it would actually be breaking the law to interfere or try to stop them. Japanese prisons are notoriously bad. In the past, people have tried to cut the nets, but the dolphins are usually so scared that they will not even leave.