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LORO PARQUE VS. PETA

Where rights may be wrong

After several months of wrangling, a legal dispute between the animal rights organisation PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) and Loro Parque has now come to an end. Here's a look behind the scenes of this animal rights activist group.

The sequence of events is as follows. In 2016 Loro Parque sued PETA over accusations made to the Guardia Civil SEPRONA division (Spanish nature protection service) over supposed maltreatment of its orcas. PETA not only reported Loro Parque to SEPRONA but also started an international press campaign against the park, even though the previous investigations by SEPRONA had confirmed that there were absolutely no indications of maltreatment and that the orcas were in the finest conditions.

The sentence published on November 7 by the Puerto de La Cruz court confirms and accredits that, "The orca installations at Loro Parque fulfil the regulations in force and the general condition of the orcas is the



↑ The court confirmed that the orcas are looked after very well indeed

correct one". It also states that, "The activity developed at Loro Parque complies strictly with the applicable legal requirements and has the obligatory authorisations and licences" and confirms that it has been verified that, "The zoological park has qualified personnel to take care of and medically treat the orcas that live in its installations".

At no time does the judicial resolution question the wellbeing of the orcas at Loro Parque, on the contrary, it makes it very clear that the orcas are in good condition, and attended to by qualified professionals and experts. This implies clearly that the accusations of maltreatment or even torture were not true.

However, the sentence balances between the right to honour and the freedom of speech. The court understands that these affirmations, although demonstrated as false, are protected by the right to freedom of speech.

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LORO PARQUE VS. PETA

More than one face

Continued from front page

There is no doubt that in a democratic society this right has to be protected but it is also necessary to protect the legal and legitimate economic activities which are the motor of our society.

Therefore, Loro Parque will appeal against this sentence to the High Court in Santa Cruz de Tenerife in order to address the fact that the legitimate use of freedom of speech cannot be an excuse for organising defamation campaigns against organisations like Loro Parque, which has been fighting for and funding the conservation of nature and the wellbeing of animals for 45 years.

The zoological director of Loro Parque, Wolfgang Rades, commenting on PETA's activities, said, "We are regularly audited and awarded by independent organisations. We work constantly with scientists from all over the world to confirm that our animals are doing well. In some of the radical protest organisations, people from completely different professions call themselves specialists who allegedly know better than qualified scientists."

Media-effective actions as a means to an end

But who and what is PETA and what does the organisation that so vehemently attacks Loro Parque stand for? PETA is the abbreviation for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, founded in Norfolk (USA) in 1980 by the former activist and today's PETA boss Ingrid Newkirk. The organisation now has more than two million members around the world and earns about \$30 million a year. This money is exempted from taxes due to the non-profit status of the association. But how non-profit is PETA really? This is a question that the organisation, which repeatedly draws attention to itself through media effective campaigns, has to put up with. First of all, it does not, as is so often mistakenly understood, stand for animal welfare, but for animal rights, and the organisation obviously interprets this concern very creatively.

In general, the PETA representatives are against the exploitation of all animals. This also includes a ban on meat and dairy products, the wearing of



↑ Loro Parque has been fighting for the conservation of nature and the wellbeing of animals for 45 years

leather, wool and fur as well as the rejection of leisure activities such as horse riding, hunting, fishing or beekeeping, and of course, the zoos and circuses are at the top of the list of the most criticised. In macabre flyers, the so-called responsible persons compare hen batteries with a concentration camp. Children are unsettled by sentences such as, "Your father kills animals". In fact, a flyer addressed to children says, "Your daddy teaches you the wrong things when he tells you what is right and wrong - so you should explain to him that he kills fish while fishing and that it's wrong to kill someone. Until your dad learns that killing others is no fun, keep cats and dogs away from him. He enjoys killing helpless animals so much that they could be next in line."

Regarding the killing of animals PETA should keep its

own doorstep clean. Animals that are freed by PETA, often with media impact, are seldom cared for until they are adopted. In 2016, the Washington Post reported that approximately 72 per cent of the rescued animals were put to sleep, not only because they were old, injured or too aggressive, but also because the effort to find a new home was described as a, "Waste of resources". A former employee, who under the name of Mom2nomads, published her experiences on a blog, confirmed this. She says that not all new entries have been registered, or their weight has been reported as higher than it really is, so that more animals can be put to sleep without anyone knowing, some of them on the same day. Like the Chihuahua Maya belonging to nine-year-old Cynthia from Virginia. At the end of 2014, the animal

suddenly disappeared from a camping site. Thanks to a surveillance video, it was possible to see that the unchipped animal was caught and taken away by PETA members from the steps of their caravan. The little dog was killed the same day. The eyewitness said on her blog, "I had to fight for every animal I wanted to find a family for. I was considered too sentimental. I worked for a while in a socially difficult area and encouraged the construction of an animal shelter where animals would also be

mals in PETA's care have been killed over the last ten years. On flyers, PETA warns cat owners against letting their cats run free. The dangers posed by traffic and people are too great, in other words it's a plea for keeping cats at home as the best way of life. Does this really do justice to the nature of the animal? And what is the difference between keeping a pet exclusively in one's own four walls and keeping a tiger in a zoo enclosure suitable for the species? PETA's line does not appear to be quite clear

then put towards financing processes which cause more of a spectacle.

British photographer David Slater can also tell a tale or two. About six years ago, he observed and photographed macacos in Indonesia to publish a picture book. The animals got used to his presence. One day, a monkey he called Naruto took advantage of an unobserved moment to use the camera's shutter release and took his own picture. At first, Slater thought it had been an absolute stroke of luck. But the photos went around the world because PETA accused the photographer of denying the monkey the right to his own image. So, the monkey has a right to determine his image and everything about it? Every reasonable thinking person asks himself, "What are they doing? But not PETA. The organisation has ruined the photographer with its legal cases. He couldn't make it to San Francisco on the last day of the case because he couldn't afford the aircraft ticket. The photos are so well known that he can't earn any more money with them anyway. In his commentary about the grotesque monkey selfie, the author and moderator Micky Beisenherz asked on the German website www.stern.de, "What about the countless photos of dead animals whose corpses you show off without their consent for your campaigns, robbing them of their last dignity?"

Would it not make more sense to put the money of animal-loving humans into genuine animal protection, instead of into numerous questionable campaigns, nonsensical legal processes and apparent animal shelters, which are more like killing stations, and above all into their own bank account? All donors are advised to check carefully who they provide their money to and whether this really makes sense. He who screams loudest is not always right, but the one who does the most, is. ■



↑ All the animals at Loro Parque are cared for by qualified personnel

vaccinated or sterilised and the owners could be encouraged to behave responsibly. But that was rejected outright. During this time, the organisation also decided to sterilise only the bitches of fighting dogs for cost reasons, knowing full well that there is a great danger that the male offspring could be used for dog fighting. All this has so exhausted me that I couldn't bear it any more". It is estimated that around 30,000 ani-

in terms of content. But it certainly is when it comes to attention. They exploit everything possible in the media, including for example, the orca situation at Loro Parque. Why not stand up for the right of the hurricanes to clean the water in the oceans? Maybe because it means less attention, less publicity and more effort? A waste of resources, if in other ways, many more donations can be collected? These are



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