



## **A hidden show in National Museum of Marine Biology and Aquarium**

**By:** Hai Chiang, Yung-Hui Chen & Ming-Chin Liu

**Institution:** National Museum of Marine Biology and Aquarium, Taiwan, Republic of China

NMMBA imported six Beluga Whales in 2002, becoming the only museum in Taiwan presenting marine animal performances. NMMBA has profoundly influenced visitors through interactive educational exhibits. From 2002-2009 a show called 'Beluga's Eco-classroom' enabled visitors to participate in an interactive session with aquarium trainers. The programme was very popular but seating on stage was limited resulting in visitor complaints. Animal rights activists also called for an end to marine mammal shows. NMMBA needed to balance visitors' needs and animals' rights.

In 2009, to avoid spreading H1N1 flu, NMMBA stopped the Eco-classroom programme and changed the form of demonstration. Visitors no longer received a schedule of Beluga shows; the stage area was always open during visiting hours; and instead of routine shows, only casual training and feeding activities were held and no longer called 'shows'. Surprisingly, all parties were satisfied, stage seats were always available, and there were no more complaints about animal rights. Because the Belugas do not perform routinely, visitors who see training sessions by chance feel fortunate. We performed a survey to understand the 'why' behind the 'Hidden Show' and obtained some valuable directions for similar activities in future.