



The future of selection and introduction of new aquarium species

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Public aquariums are under pressure to justify why they keep animals in captivity and source specimens from the wild, and are often criticised for being consumers rather than protectors of aquatic life. Many see captive breeding as part of the answer but, because we are unable to manipulate the reproductive cycles of most species, it is unlikely that captive breeding will entirely supplant collection from the sea. Furthermore, aquariums are by nature pioneering organisations and are unlikely to stop exploring the collection and display of new species.

The Merlin group of Aquariums has developed a set of principles to underpin animal selection and management policies. These principles are embodied in the slogan 'Breed, Rescue and Protect', and apply to the care of creatures in our aquariums, the acquisition of new species, and our engagement with the environments and populations from which these species are sourced. The team at Kelly Tarlton's Underwater World worked towards achieving these principles by culturing the Spiny Sea Dragon (*Solegnathus spinosissimus*), and successfully hatched and reared 20 juveniles.