
Brought to you by SeaWorld!

As the father of an eight-year-old, I am painfully aware of the attractions of charismatic megafauna. Over the weekend, I took Rose to SeaWorld, pretty much the capital of charismatic megafauna, for an overnight with her YMCA youth group. We slept with the penguins, and saw lots of other — well, charismatic megafauna.

The highlight of the park is the killer whale show, at Shamu Stadium. I don’t think I have been to SeaWorld in about thirty years, but one thing stood out to me during the show: the purported ecological consciousness of the place. The killer whale show is called One Ocean, and it features your standard variety of orca tricks. But it also claims to raise consciousness by telling everyone that it is our responsibility to protect the ocean and its creatures.

How very nice. But really — how very nauseating.

It’s easy to tell people not to throw bottles and plastic bags in the ocean, and I suppose I should be thankful for that. But through the entire show — and indeed, throughout the entire park — climate change was not mentioned ***once***. I know, I know: people don’t come for a lecture. I get that. But you can’t even mention that the world is heating up, and that increases in greenhouse gas emissions could turn the oceans into acid? Not once?

Well, maybe that’s a little unfair. It’s a show. Give them a break. They advertise that they really care; so much so that they have a whole website about their conservation efforts called, appropriately enough, SeaWorld Cares. But that won’t help you. Put the phrases “climate change” and “climate” into the site’s search engine, and you will find: *nothing*. You might find something vaguely related under the conservative fund, for “habitat protection.” But no mention of climate at all. Just think of the amount of good SeaWorld could do if just in passing, its very-well-attended shows and parks would mention that oceans are threatened by greenhouse gases, the “evil twin” of climate change.

And no: it isn’t a long game, to get people interested in protecting animals and then showing them the causes of the problems with the oceans. At some point, you have to tell people. SeaWorld has been operating since the 1970’s. Maybe some time next century they will get around to it?

The better explanation is more straightforward. SeaWorld is in the park and recreation business. It likes to suggest — without really saying so — that it is basically some sort of research and animal rescue institute, but it’s not. It’s got a major theme park in San Antonio; now I might think highly of San Antonio, but you’re not going to find too much sea life there. In a few months, it will have its initial public offering. In other words, mentioning things like climate is bad for business.

Put another way: SeaWorld cares, but not that much. It’s a green company, all right: but the green it seems to be most concerned about doesn’t come from chlorofyll.