

My name is London. I am 9 years old and I am going to be a marine biologist. I am coming to you on behalf of the students at Blaine Elementary, Junior and Senior High schools and as a concerned citizen of this state. I am also a former responder for the Whatcom marine mammal stranding network, current holder of the Rob Ryerson Memorial Volunteer of the Year Award, and President and Founder of the Blue Advocates Group, based in Blaine, Wash. Please do not be distracted by my age. Please pay attention instead to the facts that we all need to know about our salmon and our killer whales.

I have always had an interest in cetacean and marine biology and was deeply moved by the film *Blackfish*, a documentary exposing the shocking truth about the condition of the orcas at SeaWorld. Shortly after watching the film I was able to attend a special screening at a local community college and was then inspired to do what I could to raise awareness and educate others about the plight of captive killer whales.



Through my work as a responder for the Whatcom Marine Mammal Stranding Network and ongoing education, including dozens of lectures and symposiums put on by the Orca Network and The Center for Whale Research, it has become crystal clear that there is an even more critical need to save what is left of our endangered Southern Resident killer whales from starvation. Through my volunteer work, personal trips to visit the Snake River dams, and time spent in the San Juan Island, I have gained more experience and seen firsthand what is happening to our orcas.

The fact is, we are in a state of emergency. Action MUST be taken now.

After attending dozens of lectures and symposiums I was further inspired to take up a more serious and pertinent issue regarding the Southern Resident orcas, focused on the growing imperative to breach the Lower Snake River Dams. My goal is to spread awareness of how serious an issue this is for the orca as the dams, are directly affecting the number of wild salmon, which is the whales' main food source.

When the federal government listed our orcas as endangered under the Endangered Species Act, it made a promise – a promise to protect them and to do everything in its power to preserve them. A promise to preserve their habitat and a promise that future generations such as my own will be able to look out over the water and have a chance to see this national treasure in their own habitat swimming freely, without fear of starving to death, or having their calls drowned out by our ever-increasing marine traffic. They are free beings, but they are at the mercy of corporate greed.

The fact is, our Southern Resident killer whales are dying. They are dying from a lack of noise-free habitat, but most of all from starvation, from a lack of salmon. Every year federal officials say they are working to restore the salmon, but every year the runs get worse and worse, and the salmon fewer and fewer, all because we keep insisting on trying solutions that have proven over and over to be failures.

It is time for you as leaders to make good on your promise to protect our friends and save these poor creatures who are struggling every day for their very survival. Do what is right and remove the four Lower Snake River dams. Don't let the extinction of these animals be on your conscience.

Sincerely,

London Fletcher

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