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**SPORTS**  
**TECHNOLOGY**  
**SPACE**  
**HEALTH**  
**ENTERTAINMENT**  
**POLITICS**  
**LAW**  
**CAREER**  
**TRAVEL**  
**FOOD**  
**ARTS & STYLE**  
**BOOKS**  
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**ANALYSIS**  
**LOCAL**

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## World Report

### New Research Group Takes Initiative to Study California's Dolphins

Aired September 24, 2000 - 2:44 p.m. ET

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DEBRA DOUGHERTY, CNN ANCHOR: In the United States, dolphins have been protected and studied extensively in the state of Florida. Not so in California, where the marine mammal's population is in danger due to pollution. Well now a new research group has taken the initiative to study California's dolphins.

CNN Espanol reports.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

MESALINA SADD, CNN ESPANOL (voice-over): It took a single trip around Santa Monica Bay for marine biologist Maddalena Bearzi to realize that one of the most important animals of the area was not being studied.

Until 1996, there were no comprehensive studies on the area's dolphins, their behavior and distribution. This is why she decided to start the Los Angeles Dolphin Project with a group of volunteers.

MADDALENA BEARZI, LOS ANGELES DOLPHIN PROJECT (through translator): Dolphins are extremely important environmental indicators. Los Angeles Bay is very polluted, so the presence and study of these marine mammals can offer much information not only about the species but about the health of the environment.

I think the public needs to understand that these are wild animals needing protection. A way of helping them is not to throw trash into the ocean and to understand that the best way to study them is without disturbing them or getting too close to them.

SAAD: The Los Angeles Dolphin Project also has the goal of serving as a mechanism to educate people in Los Angeles about the existence and needs of these animals, which are among the most intelligent marine animals. This is why the organization takes children out on boats to observe the dolphins in their natural environment, an enriching experience as it was for (UNINTELLIGIBLE).

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Well, it was real interesting because they taught us how that we could help the environment, especially Santa Monica Bay, and how we could help the animals that are in there, because -- and they taught us how we could get more information, because we know very little about the animals that are in there and their behaviors and how they feed. SAAD: Dolphins start reproducing when they are 10 years old and can live to be over 50 years old.

Information obtained through the Los Angeles Dolphin Project will supplement data from studies in both Northern and Southern California. But more importantly, it will help the public learn a little more about this playful and sociable marine animal.

For CNN, Mesalina Sadd (ph), Los Angeles.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

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