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L.A. Dolphin Project turns Santa Monica Bay into a floating classroom for Westside students



Seventh-grader George Tracy, 12, observes a bottlenose dolphin "bow riding" the L.A. Dolphin Project boat in Santa Monica Bay. PHOTOS BY BRYAN McLELLAN / WESTSIDE WEEKLY



Culver City Middle School students, above, prepare to leave for a Santa Monica Bay wildlife count. At right, a bottlenose dolphin does a "tail slap."

Cetacean TEACHERS

Ted Shaffrey
WESTSIDE WEEKLY

Seventh-grader Shawn Ballentine, 12, loves to talk about his favorite dolphins. They are all fictional characters, such as Flipper from the television series and Skippy, the dolphin that takes over the world on an episode of "The Simpsons."

But this school year, for the first time, Shawn has had a chance to observe real dolphins up close in their natural environment, gliding through the water and communicating with each other through clicks and whistles in the Pacific Ocean.

"They're great," Shawn said last week as he stood on the tip of a 30-foot boat operated by the L.A. Dolphin Project.



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