



# Boating News

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## L.A. Dolphin Project Is A Rare Species

The Los Angeles Dolphin Project is the first long-term study of dolphins and marine mammals in Los Angeles waters. It is conducted under the nonprofit Ocean Conservation Society based in Marina del Rey.

Dr. Maddalena Bearzi, president of the Ocean Conservation Society, moved to Los Angeles from Italy in 1996, where she researched marine mammals for the Tethys Research Institute.

Upon settling in Los Angeles, Bearzi was surprised to find that no one had ever studied dolphins in the L.A. coastal waters, an area impacted by pollution and urban run-off.

So, Bearzi got together with native Californian Capt. Charles Saylan, a fellow researcher from the Tethys Institute, who is now based in Hollywood.

They co-founded the Los Angeles Dolphin Project, which is conducted by the Ocean Conservation Society, a staff of researchers and volunteers.

### DOLPHIN, *from page 14*

#### Welcome To Finland

Bearzi said, "We started looking at dolphin populations and distribution, using a technique called photo-identification to recognize individuals."

Bearzi explained that dolphins live at the top of the marine food chain and are an excellent bio-indicator of the status of the marine ecosystem.

Pollutants present in the water are "bio-magnified" up the food chain and are therefore more prevalent in marine life that exists at the top of the chain.

#### They Did It On Porpoise

The Ocean Conservation Society has done presentations at local schools. They've also led on-the-water field trips and classes, and they've conducted

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kayak clean-ups of Marina del Rey, where participants paddle throughout the basins and use nets to extract trash from the marina waters.

OCS offers scientific mentorship programs, which are aimed at middle school through college ages, and also offers teacher-training programs and curriculum development.

#### Be Bottle-Nosy

The Ocean Conservation Society offers a unique program called the Research Ride Along program that is an alternative to everyday whale watching.

The public can climb aboard their 50-foot research vessel and spend a day with marine biologists and dolphins. Participants may help research by collecting data, or they may simply sit back, observe, and relax.

The Research Ride Along program is an intimate experience, as the crew on board allows a maximum of six guests per outing. The Ride Along is offered for a donation of \$75 per person, which goes directly to fund their research and is tax-deductible. While aboard, participants are treated to breakfast, snacks, and beverages.

OCS also has an Adopt-A-Dolphin program, which seeks to educate and involve the public in their work.

"We have published many scientific papers on our results and have recently changed the program focus to take advantage of emerging technologies like bio-acoustic recording and satellite imaging," said Bearzi.

For more information, go to [www.oceanconservation.org](http://www.oceanconservation.org) or call (310) 822-5205.