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Wild Dolphins Help Scientists to Rescue Suicidal Girl Off Coast of L.A.

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Aisling Maria Cronin (/author/aisling_cronin)



June 4, 2014



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An incredible rescue story profiled by National Geographic (<http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2014/05/29/dolphins-guide-scientists-to-rescue-suicidal-girl/>) last week shows us just how intelligent (<http://www.onegreenplanet.org/animalsandnature/7-super-smart-animals-species/>) dolphins can be, in a way that is seemingly little-understood by modern science.

In this article, Maddalena Bearzi of the Ocean Conservation Society (<http://www.oceanconservation.org/>) tells the story of how a pod of wild bottlenose dolphins off the coast of L.A. guided her team of ocean researchers toward a suicidal girl who was on the brink of death.

Bearzi was the leader of this team, which had been engaged in photo-identification work with the dolphins before they abruptly turned away from their usual feeding site and swam out toward deeper waters. She said (<http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2014/05/29/dolphins-guide-scientists-to-rescue-suicidal-girl/>), "We were so accustomed to tracking these coastal metropolitan dolphins back and forth within a few hundred meters of the beach, that seeing them abruptly leave a foraging ground and change direction came as a surprise to the research team. I decided to follow them."

When she and the team reached the site to which the pod had moved, they were shocked to discover (<http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2014/05/29/dolphins-guide-scientists-to-rescue-suicidal-girl/>) the "seemingly lifeless" body of a young woman, who "feebly turned her head toward us, half-raising her hand as a weak sign for help."


The scientists quickly pulled the girl on to their boat, headed back to Marina del Rey – the closest harbor – and sought medical assistance.

The girl, who is believed to have been eighteen years of age, was vacationing in L.A. from Germany, and – as a letter found in her bag explained – she had been attempting to commit suicide. Doctors at the Marina del Rey hospital assured the researchers that the girl would pull through, and thanked them for their assistance.

Bearzi, however, believed that the credit should have gone to the dolphins.

She later reflected (<http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2014/05/29/dolphins-guide-scientists-to-rescue-suicidal-girl/>), "What might (the dolphins) have done with her if we hadn't been there? Might they have tried to save her? There are many anecdotal accounts of dolphins saving humans from death and disaster, either by guiding them to shore, fending off sharks or helping them to remain afloat until help arrives. Many scientists think dolphins do not, in fact, save humans because there is not enough hard scientific evidence to support these stories. But that day I witnessed coastal bottlenose dolphins suddenly leave their feeding activities and head offshore. And in doing so, they led us to save a dying girl, some three miles offshore. Coincidence?"

Maybe it is, maybe it isn't. Either way, it provides us with plenty of food for thought and raises a whole lot of provocative questions, not least of which is: do animals

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(<http://www.onegreenplanet.org/vegan-truth-about-the-federal-wildlife-service-here-to-protect-animal-or-paying-interests/>)

capable of this degree of intuitive insight really belong in captivity (<http://www.onegreenplanet.org/animalsandnature/dolphins-dont-belong-in-captivity-heres-why/>)?

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(<https://www.flickr.com/photos/garrettc/5836723226/in/photolist-9TLJt5-9rfl6i-cyCgJA-9MkKzH-8Nwxc9-dmmYJk-9DFEdk-dmmuWe-7wBSvw-dmmY9z-dmmxYE-5n4CBD-5n8UuC-8NyZbU-5n8V4Q-ajjJoU-9tLZUp-6pwPTL-5N48u1-dcuEwX-85wMi8-85zX1q-85zURQ-85zRB9-8xojmY-5PsDFs-ekGbnw-brYbMQ-83PTK1-6TsTtG-9SLNvH-q6xue-6TsSaA-6P7gev-6NY51i-6NXMxp-6NYCTX-6P3VfU-6NXVze-6NZ1pF-6P38FL-6Pbhiu-6P4h5G-6PbEd7-6NY41n-6P3WPN-6P3KNm-6P3sVh-6P2zem-6NXwHp/>)Flickr

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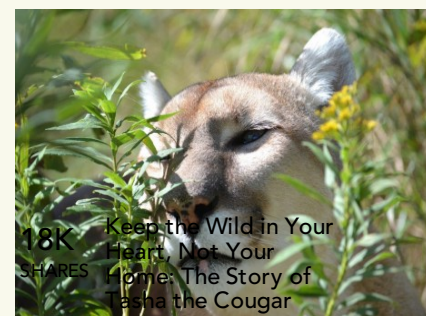
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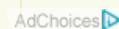
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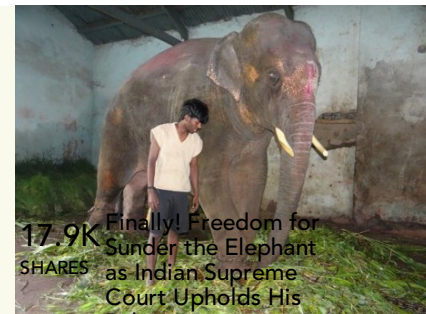
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