

Maddalena Bearzi

Ocean Conservation Society President - Marine Biologist (dolphins + whales), Conservationist - Published author - Journalist/Blogger (National Geographic)

What I Learned from Wild Dolphins

Maddalena BearziJun 11, 2020 · 3 min read★

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Yes, other animals can teach too



face-to-face with a wild bottlenose dolphin — @maddalenabearzi/ocs

“Why do you study dolphins?” an enthusiastic student asks me as we walk through the metal detectors at his high school in a poor neighborhood of Los Angeles. I was invited here to give a talk to his class about my experiences as a marine biologist and the current problems facing local dolphins and their habitat.

I tell him how, at the beginning, I was motivated mainly by the naïve curiosity of a nature-lover drawn toward dolphins and their underwater world. That same sense of inquisitiveness later turned into the desire of a young scientist methodically striving to learn more about these magnificent creatures, to dig deeper into the secrets of their everyday lives.

When I began doing research in my twenties, I had no idea I would gradually become a staunch advocate for dolphin protection. It wasn’t something I thought about or I planned but, after spending thousands of hours in the company of these magnificent animals at sea, and coming to know them better, I stopped seeing dolphins simply as the object of my studies. To me, they had become individuals, each with its own personalities and emotions. They are remarkably similar to us in so many ways. As time passed, I observed the ocean changing around me and the creatures I had come to love in serious peril. And I came to believe that ocean conservation, creating awareness, and finding ways to transform that awareness into action, are all that matter.

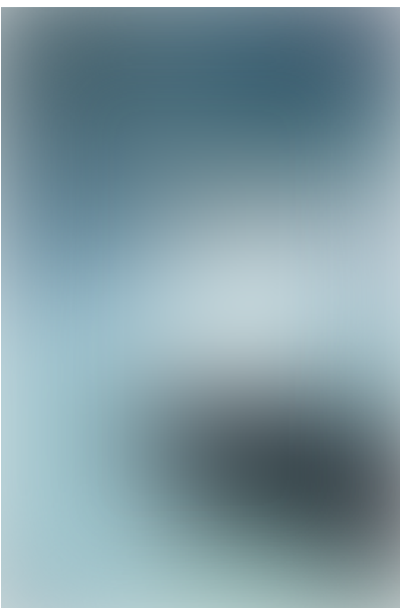


Dr. Maddalena Bearzi studying dolphins from her research boat off California

In the epilogue of my book Dolphin Confidential: Confessions of a Field Biologist, I write: “*only through the individual cultivation of hope, love, passion, compassion, humility, education and active involvement, can we build a strong sense of stewardship of our world within our communities. People, not governments, must shape the direction in which decisions are made. Each of us has a say in the future of the dolphins, of whales, of the oceans and of our own species. Exercising that say is our chance for greatness, perhaps the last chance.*”

. . .

Maddalena Bearzi has studied the ecology and conservation of marine mammals for over twenty-five years. She is President and Co-founder of the Ocean Conservation Society, and Co-author of Beautiful Minds: The Parallel Lives of Great Apes and Dolphins (Harvard University Press, 2008). She also works as a photo-journalist and blogger for several publications, including the National Geographic. Her latest book is Dolphin Confidential: Confessions of a Field Biologist (University of Chicago Press, 2012).



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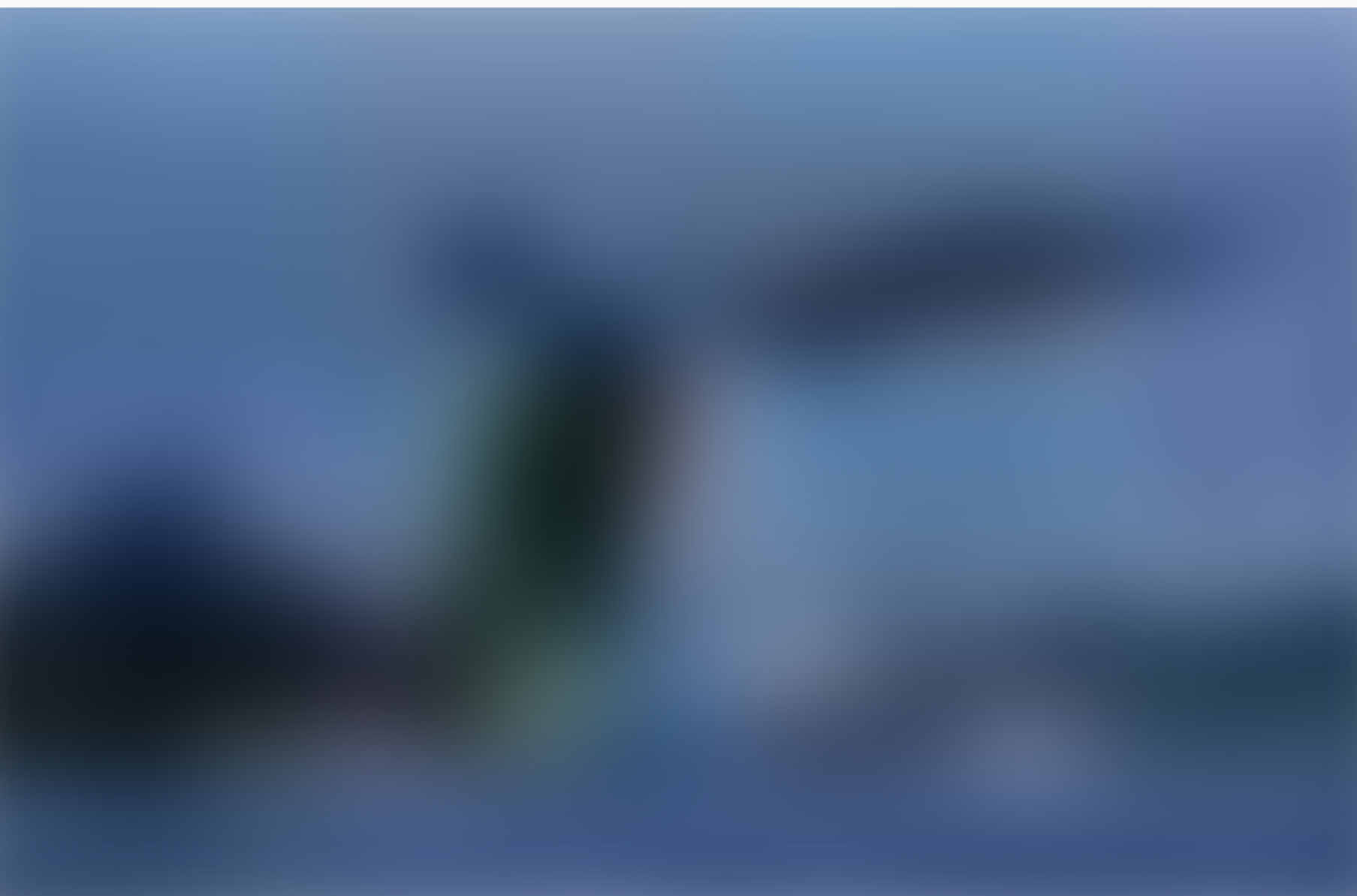
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While the People Protest, Trump Imperils the Planet



Humpback whale mother and calf @maddalenabearzi/ocs

In the last days, it was not enough to witness a reckless Mr. Trump making an informal declaration of martial law and using the name of George Floyd to tout what he views as his administration’s economic victories. Even with everyone still shaken by a pandemic that has claimed over 100,000 lives in the US and protests spreading throughout America under his nose, the President still found the time to dismantle even more environmental regulations.

A few days ago, Mr. Trump signed an executive order opening the Atlantic Ocean’s only fully protected Marine Sanctuary off New England to commercial fishing...

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