

S P R I N G - S U M M E R 2 0 1 4

seawatch

the Ocean Conservation Society newsletter

www.oceanconservation.org

FOLLOW THE PLASTIC

THE PLAGUE OF PLASTIC POLLUTION

Billions of bottles and bags are used every year in the US alone. Despite all our efforts to recycle and ban bags from markets, we are able to recover only 5% of the produced plastic. So, where do the rest of these products go? About 50% end up in landfills and most of the rest is... NOT accounted for. What does this mean? Basically, that plastic ends up in the oceans. With light and wave action, some of this floating plastic breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces. These tiny fragments that remain at sea and never disappear create, thanks to currents, wind and earth's rotation, "gyres". Gyres are enormous, slow rotating "whirlpools" in which these micro-pellets continue to accumulate. The most famous is the North Pacific Gyre, which some scientists believe to be twice the size of the United States. But this is not the only gyre; researchers have discovered five gigantic oceanic gyres around the world and many smaller ones in places like Antarctica and Alaska. The plastic particles absorb contaminants such as DDT, PCB and other pesticides. Particularly dangerous are the Persistent Organic Pollutants (known as POPs). These accumulate in the pellets and are then ingested by marine creatures. Seabirds and cetaceans are not immune to the plastic plague and dead carcasses of these animals are often found filled with plastic. So, do these chemicals come back to us in the seafood we eat? Well, sooner or later...

Plastic pollution is one of the great environmental problems we are facing today; a hazard not only for marine wildlife but also for we humans.

- Charles Saylan, OCS Executive Director

Debunking Captivity ...

Captivity is a hot topic these days...

Thanks to documentaries such as *The Cove* and *Blackfish*, the general public is starting to know more about what's going on behind the scenes of "smiling" dolphins locked in tanks. In a recent blog for the National Geographic, OCS President Dr. Maddalena Bearzi discusses three reasons for not keeping dolphins in captivity based on her own twenty-plus years of experience with these creatures in the wild. In the blog, she explains how dolphins are large-brained, cognitive animals living in complex societies in the open ocean. She talks about their need for open space, their emotions and personalities.



Keeping cetaceans (and other animals as well) in a restricted environment may have been more acceptable years ago, when we really didn't know any better; when we didn't have enough information about who these animals really are in the wild and what they need to live. But today, we know a lot more than we did back then. As she clarifies at the end of the blog post, "*It's time we recognize that the only, true reason we still keep these magnificent*

and socially complex creatures captive is for our entertainment; entertainment for the motive of making money, and lots of it. Dolphins are who, not what, and they deserve some rights. We humans should use our judgment and compassion toward these (and other) fellow animals and stop keeping them caged as our prisoners."

You can read the entire blog at:

<http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2014/04/08/debunking-captivity-3-reasons-not-to-keep-dolphins-in-a-tank/>

Save the Date!

American Cetacean Society Conference

November 7 – 9, 2014, Newport Beach, CA

"Tuned in to whales: Conservation, research & education" is the title of the upcoming 14th International Conference of the American Cetacean Society. Join a unique group of scientists, policy makers and conservationists for a program rich of

interesting talks, poster context, silent auction, book signing and much more. The deadline for poster abstract is August 24th. For more information you can check: <http://acsonline.org/education/conference/>



OCS Facebook Fan Corner

Almost 10,000 !!! Yes, it's great to have such a high number of facebook LIKES! It means we are doing something right... If you already are one of our OCS FB fans, please tell your friends about what we do and ask them to join us. As always, we will continue to post news about our research & educational programs as well as information on what it's going on in the world of ocean research & protection. Great images and a few cartoons will also continue to make you smile! *In the image: a blue whale off Los Angeles, California (photo: ©2014mbearzi/OCS under NMFS permit).*



Quick News...

The Baltimore Aquarium is the first facility in the US to publicly consider closing its dolphin exhibit

Read the article and watch the video about this controversial subject (<http://america.aljazeera.com/watch/shows/america-tonight/2014/6/the-national-aquariumdebatesfreeingitsdolphinsparttwo.html>)

New river dolphin species found in Brazil...

Scientists have discovered a new species of river dolphin in Brazil, the "Araguaian boto," the first such finding in nearly 100 years. Genetic work shows that it diverged from other river dolphins more than 2 million years ago. This species, named *Inia araguaiaensis*, becomes the fifth true river dolphin, amongst the rarest and most endangered animals. The last river dolphin species to be described, in 1918, was the Chinese baiji, which went extinct a few years ago.

15-year analysis of blue whale range off California finds conflict with shipping lanes

A comprehensive analysis of blue whale movements off the West Coast found that their favored feeding areas are bisected by heavily used shipping lanes, increasing the threat of injury and mortality. Moving the shipping lanes off L.A. and San Francisco to slightly different areas - at least, during summer and fall when blue whales are most abundant - could significantly decrease the probability of ship strikes.



DONOR ALERT !!!

IT'S ALMOST TWO DECADES WE'VE BEEN CONDUCTING MARINE MAMMAL RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AIMED TO PROTECT OUR OCEAN AND ITS INHABITANTS. TO CHECK OUT WHAT WE HAVE DONE (AND WHAT WE ARE STILL DOING...), PLEASE TAKE A LOOK AT OUR OCS WEBSITE! HERE, YOU CAN FIND INFORMATION ABOUT ALL OUR RESEARCH PROJECTS, OUR PAST & ONGOING CAMPAIGNS, AND MUCH MORE.

MONEYWISE, WE'VE SEEN UPS AND DOWNS BUT, SOMEHOW, WE'RE ALWAYS ABLE TO KEEP OUR NON-PROFIT RUNNING AND OUR DATA COLLECTION FLOWING THROUGHOUT THE YEARS. BUT NOW WE FIND OURSELVES IN NEED OF FUNDING TO CONTINUE OUR RESEARCH & CONSERVATION PROJECTS. AS YOU MAY KNOW, GRANTS ARE SCANT THESE DAYS SO WE RELY ON THE GREAT GENEROSITY OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

IF YOU ARE A POTENTIAL DONOR (OR YOU MIGHT SUGGEST SOMEONE INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING OUR WORK), PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH US. WE WILL BE GLAD TO TAKE YOU OUT WITH US FOR A RESEARCH DAY AT SEA AND EXPLAIN TO YOU WHAT WE DO IN GREAT DETAIL. PLEASE CONTACT:

info@oceanconservation.org or call us at 310.822.5205.

<http://www.oceanconservation.org/donate/donate.htm>

OCS Research

The diversity and richness of species in our study area of Santa Monica Bay and nearby waters, off California, continues to surprise us. It's not just the record number of whales sighted both during the winter and spring months (which now includes species like Bryde's whales and pilot whales!), but also the variety of other marine creatures. Recently, the funny looking sunfish have returned in high number and, in the last weeks, the by-the-wind-sailor jellyfish have been spotted all along the Southern California coast.

Further, bottlenose dolphins seem to have found a good place to dine inside the Marina del Rey Harbor. In the last few months, we've spent days following and recording data on small groups of bottlenose dolphins (usually 3-5 individuals) inside the harbor!

A bottlenose dolphin forages inside the Marina del Rey Harbor in California. Image: ©2014M. Bearzi/OCS - NOAA permit #856-1835



"BE WHALE AWARE CAMPAIGN" CONTINUES...



With the amazing whale and dolphin sightings we are all experiencing off Southern California, OCS can't stress enough the importance of respecting these animals and their habitat.

Our OCS BE WHALE AWARE CAMPAIGN is continuing all along the California Coast to make boaters, surfers, paddlers, swimmers and kayakers aware of regulations. Please, remember to download and share with others the three versions of our BE WHALE AWARE brochure at: <http://www.oceanconservation.org/education/be-whale-aware/index.html>). You can also request printed copies of the brochures sending an email to: info@oceanconservation.org.

WE HAVE UPDATED OUR OCS WEBSITE! PLEASE, CHECK OUR ONGOING AND PAST RESEARCH PROJECTS, THE OCS VIDEO & PHOTO GALLERY, OUR SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS AND MORE!

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, GOOGLE + & TWITTER

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Ocean Conservation Society
p.o. box 12860, marina del rey, ca 90295
ph. 310.822.5205, info@oceanconservation.org
www.oceanconservation.org

Logos: J. Bass, J. Arlukiewicz
Drawings: M. Demma
Photos & text: M. Bearzi, C. Saylan
Newsletter design: M. Bearzi

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