

Voices in the Ocean: A Journey into the Wild and Haunting World of Dolphins

By Susan Casey. 2015. Doubleday Canada, 320 Front Street West, Suite 1400, Toronto, ON, Canada, M5V 3B6. 304 pages, 34.00 CAD, Cloth.

Susan Casey has a few titles to her credit, all dealing with ocean ecology and the wildlife of the world's oceans. In this latest work, she is following the research and current status of dolphins, including orcas and other cetaceans. She begins with the good things which we have learned about dolphins: their communication, their disposition towards humans, their fidelity to place and pod or family. Within the general framework of our good interactions with them are numerous stories of dolphins rescuing humans, showing the way to struggling or drowning swimmers unknown to any humans nearby, and their way of detecting human physiological

anomalies like pregnant women, handicapped swimmers or situations where the person was cramping or having a heart attack while swimming in the dolphin's vicinity. These stories collected from around the world are legend among those who interact with dolphins, making the emotional connection between marine mammals and the more familiar four-footed land animals. They show that dolphins have at least the same intelligence, self-recognition, ability to problem-solve, and the ability to be individually sensitive to different stresses in their environment.

The second part of the book is all about those different environmental stresses which human intervention imposes on the marine mammal populations. Harvesting of dolphins for food, for pets and for the entertainment industry are documented with specific sites and methods of harvest which have been used in recent decades. Casey is not afraid to name names, whether they be the location of the dolphin slaughter, the theme parks which misuse the animals or the players involved. Canada gets a particularly bad report with regard to Marineland and Gamefarm at Niagara Falls. The treatment of the dolphins, orcas and seals in the waterpark, and the crowding and care of bears and deer in the game paddock, are both harshly criticized. The Canadian and Ontario Government's historical lack of regulation is also explained, as this is a reason for the overcrowding and care limitations that have taken place. Thankfully, she is able to tell us that some regulations for the animals' living conditions have been proposed for legislation.

Different conservation issues for dolphins, whales, orcas and many other marine mammals are documented as the book unfolds. The reader is taken to villages in Japan and the Solomon Islands where dolphin hunting is common, enculturated and quite profitable. It is also shown to be wasteful, cruel to the animals and continued despite many protests. With increased understanding of dolphin and cetacean sensitivities more is understood of how their environment is degraded, invaded and made hostile to the animals living there. Underwater research involving sonar blasts which map the ocean floor are one assault on the sensitive hearing of the animal, so is sonar testing by the US Navy. The

effects are ignored by industry, contested by the navy and simply misunderstood by most.

There is much bad news in the book and some good news, as in most environmental reviews. This book is more than an environmental review however, as it also includes stories on the cultural importance of whales and dolphins, including a village in California that has an indigenous connection to the animals, a group in Hawai'i that regularly swims and prays with dolphins and a host of protectors, former dolphin and orca trainers, and island residents who fight the harvest and exploitation of dolphin. Worshipers, protectors and effective managers of the world's cetacean herds are documented for their care and connection to the animals.

I found myself drawn in by the arguments in favour of dolphin and whale protection, horrified by the graphic descriptions of how dolphins are harvested and taken aback by the mistreatment of the animals I have observed with pleasure in aquariums in many parts of the world. The book is an eye-opener and one which is difficult to read due to its graphic content. It ends on a historical and peaceful note of a civilization long forgotten who lived with, prayed with and respected dolphins, as depicted in the art of their towns and buildings. Who is to know what their real relationship was? Our relationship is more tenuous, more consumer-based and still developing. Susan Casey has opened a door in this book, one which shows us fascinating animals and challenges us to look seriously at dolphins, whales, orcas, belugas and any of the other marine mammals in their environment, and their relationships to us.

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