

**Dolphin Diaries: My 25 Years With Spotted Dolphins in the Bahamas.** By Denise L. Herzing. (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2011. 314+xxi pp. Hardback. \$26.99. ISBN: 978-0-312-60896-5.)

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*Dolphin Diaries* is a unique book that details the lives of a community of Atlantic spotted dolphins (*Stenella frontalis*) in the Bahamas. It was written by Denise Herzing, who began her study of these cetaceans in 1985, founded the Wild Dolphin Project in 1989, and continues her work today.<sup>o</sup> Appropriately titled, the book is literally taken from the diaries, notes, and records that Herzing painstakingly keeps about each encounter she has with these dolphins.

Even though this book is written more for the general reader than the scientist, the contribution of this volume to the scientific literature on dolphins should not be overlooked. The more important aspects include Herzing's detailed family trees for the community she studies; her chronicle of the maturation of specific dolphins from baby to adult and their adoption of new roles in the society (mother, grandmother, etc.); her account of the social devastation that can result from natural disasters (in this case, the hurricanes of 2004–2005); and her description of the sometimes positive, sometimes negative interspecies interaction between the smaller spotted dolphins and their larger and more aggressive bottlenose neighbors (*Tursiops truncatus*).

Perhaps an even more important scientific

contribution, however, stems from the fact that Herzing's findings were possible only because she has favored a "participatory" over a traditional methodology. She writes,

It was clear to me from the beginning that I wanted to study dolphins like Jane Goodall had studied chimpanzees. I wanted to be a benign observer and get to know the individuals and society through watching their interactions. . . . I was determined to work with another intelligent species using participatory science, incorporating them as mutual participants in the process, as opposed to traditional science that would view them as subjects and nonparticipants. There was no exact road map for the work, but I knew I needed to engage both my scientific training and my own knowledge of human culture and interaction in the process. If I spent enough time in a mutual relationship with an intelligent animal society, I might come to learn from them, and perhaps eventually be incorporated into their community. Although an unusually long time to commit to a specific field project, it seemed both necessary and possible to aim for twenty years at this field site to document a few generations of dolphins. (pp. 14–15)

Indeed, when one studies beings with highly sophisticated intellectual and emotional abilities—such as dolphins, elephants, chimps, and humans—it should be obvious that "participatory science" is the methodology of choice. Findings will be far richer if one has cooperative participants with whom one can establish a positive relationship.

Although most readers of this journal will nod in approval of Herzing's methodology, most will probably be caught up short when they realize that one of the implications of Herzing's work is that the serious study of ethical issues related to nonhumans can no longer remain an armchair enterprise. "Animal ethics" requires

<sup>o</sup>For the sake of full disclosure, it should be noted that the reviewer is a scientific advisor to Herzing's research organization, the Wild Dolphin Project, and since 1990 has regularly observed her fieldwork in the wild.

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1 participating in “participatory science,”  
2 and that means regular exposure to the  
3 nonhumans one studies in their natural  
4 environment over a considerable period  
5 of time. Although this poses obvious chal-  
6 lenges and inconveniences, it is critical  
7 to recognize that exemplary research on  
8 ethical issues must be based on not only a  
9 thorough familiarity with the relevant sci-  
10 entific literature but also firsthand experi-  
11 ence with these nonhumans in their natural  
12 environment. Good research in animal eth-  
13 ics requires good scientific research, which  
14 requires a participatory approach.

15 Herzing’s methodology is especially im-  
16 portant from an *ethical* perspective because  
17 it allowed her to recognize dolphins as be-  
18 ings with moral standing far more easily and  
19 more accurately than if she had used a tra-  
20 ditional approach. The cetaceans described  
21 in *Dolphin Diaries* are a *who*, not a *what*.

22 It is beyond the scope of a single review  
23 to document all of the details and episodes  
24 in Herzing’s account that support the idea  
25 that dolphins are nonhuman persons with  
26 moral standing as individuals and rights.  
27 However, two aspects of her discussion de-  
28 serve special mention: what she discovered  
29 about who dolphins are and why the captiv-  
30 ity of dolphins is ethically indefensible.

31 Throughout *Dolphin Diaries*, Herzing  
32 includes many specific examples that reveal  
33 the social sophistication of dolphins. These  
34 details are often small, and frequently they  
35 are made almost in passing. But when  
36 gathered together, they present a remark-  
37 able portrait of beings who are at least as  
38 socially complex as humans. These details  
39 include dolphin assistance of a tired swim-  
40 mer (p. 28); an extraordinary reaction to  
41 the death of a passenger on Herzing’s boat  
42 (p. 29); a dolphin’s assistance with retriev-  
43 ing the boat’s lost anchor (p. 32); Herzing’s  
44 personal relationship with the dolphin she  
45 named Rosemole (p. 33); the dolphins’ ex-  
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pectations for humans during the human-  
dolphin interactions (pp. 37–38); empathy  
among dolphins (p. 106); an apparently  
well-organized episode of retaliation (com-  
plete with supercoalitions) orchestrated by  
one of the spotted dolphins in response to  
an assault by one of the bottlenose on the  
preceding day (pp. 137–142); the diversity  
and uniqueness of dolphin personalities (p.  
164); culture among dolphins (p. 219); the  
promising first steps in two-way communi-  
cation (pp. 173–224); grief in dolphins (pp.  
230–231); and dolphin mimicry of human  
behavior (p. 241). Herzing’s account reveals  
that these cetaceans possess an impressive  
level of intellectual and emotional sophis-  
tication. Her work should unquestionably  
dispel any doubt about how advanced these  
beings are.

This book should also remove any ques-  
tion about the ethical unacceptability of the  
captivity of dolphins. In a forceful, direct,  
and eloquent discussion, Herzing labels the  
capture of wild dolphins for human pur-  
poses “brutal and horrific” (p. 278), points to  
the interrelationships between science and  
business that conceal the more unseemly  
facts of captivity, and objects to dolphin-  
assisted therapy by pointing to the lack of  
any evidence demonstrating the efficacy of  
this practice and the obvious presumption  
of species superiority.

However, Herzing also identifies key  
issues that typically never come up in dis-  
cussions about the ethics of captivity. First,  
questioning the scientific reliability of re-  
search on captive dolphins, Herzing argues,  
“A dolphin is only a dolphin in its ocean  
habitat surrounded by members of its own  
society and dealing with the everyday issues  
of dolphin life such as foraging, mating and  
socializing” (p. 218). Captive dolphins live  
in both physical and social environments so  
different from what free-living dolphins ex-  
perience that after reading Herzing’s book,

one realizes that captive research is, at best, extremely limited in what it reveals about dolphins. At worst, one is tempted to regard much captive research as either irrelevant to telling us what dolphins are like or trivial in its importance.

Herzing also points to the severe emotional consequences probably experienced by captive cetaceans. "It should not be surprising," she notes, "that smart animals can go crazy when confined in small and unnatural environments" (p. 279). Her comments suggest that the financial drivers of captivity have been a factor in producing a moral blindness so severe that it has allowed a series of tragic deaths associated with Tilikum, Sea World's oldest male orca. In what is perhaps her most ethically perceptive comment, Herzing remarks, "The very qualities that make us curious about these intelligent and social species are the same qualities that provide the fertile ground for mental disturbance. It would be ironic," she laments, "if it weren't so sad" (p. 280).

In conclusion, *Dolphin Diaries* is a fascinating window into the lives of this community of wild Atlantic spotted dolphins, but from the point of view of this journal, it must be praised as an absolutely central contribution to the debate about the ethical issues related to the treatment of dolphins by humans. The ethical implications of Herzing's work are clear, profound, and troubling. Her research provides important support for the idea that dolphins are "nonhuman persons" whose rights should be recognized. Any reader who reaches the end of the book and is not convinced that the willful slaughter of dolphins, their preventable deaths in connection with human fishing, and the captivity of dolphins for any purpose are ethically indefensible simply was not paying attention to Herzing's masterful exposition.

**Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film.** By Anat Pick. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011. 249+x pp. Paperback [also in hardback]. \$26.50. ISBN: 978-0-231-14787-3.)

SCOTT COWDELL

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This lively, fascinating, moving book is about reframing animal ethics in terms of creaturely solidarity. In this approach we are encouraged to find deeper solutions than the more familiar discourses of romantic anthropomorphism, animal rights, and utilitarian environmentalism can provide.

All of these, argues Dr. Anat Pick, are colored by modernity's mood of rationalization and power at the expense of what embodied life and relationships with actual animals reveal about creaturely being. In a Foucaultian insight, Pick sees the unnecessary and irrational violence of primate research and abattoirs as chiefly serving to assert species difference. The "otherness" of animals is thus reinforced in modernity, at the expense of the compassionate attention that only a sense of shared creatureliness can provide.

Pick ranges widely in postmodern philosophy to support her case, though Simone Weil and her mysticism of shared affliction provide the intellectual touchstone. Yet the book's approach is more evocative than argumentative. Pick, who teaches literature and film at the University of East London, offers a series of meditations on novels and art house films from the mid-20th century to the present, the latter including both fiction and documentary. From William Golding's *The Inheritors* to Marie Darrieussecq's *Pig Tales*, with their species-blurring and nonhuman perspectives, to classic documentaries on abattoirs and primate research to the films of Werner Herzog and

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