



To Touch a Wild Dolphin

Rachel Smolker

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To Touch a Wild Dolphin is the first intimate account of dolphin life in the wild. In 1982 Rachel Smolker traveled to Monkey Mia, a remote beach on the west coast of Australia where wild dolphins regularly interact with humans. Over the next fifteen years, Smolker and a team of fellow scientists were able to explore the lives of dolphins as they had never been explored before: up close, in their natural environment, with a definite recognition of individual dolphin identities.

Smolker came to know the relationships, histories, and "personalities" of the dolphins. In **To Touch a Wild Dolphin** she offers delightful portraits of dolphins she became close to, ranging from the playful and incredibly silly to the slightly crazy, moody, and unpredictable. This develops into an examination of dolphin society and the diversity of characters that inhabit it. And ultimately from the intriguing, sometimes violent differences between the sexes to the nature of mother-infant relationships, to the wide repertoire of sounds used for social communication Smolker is able to reveal the inner workings of dolphin life with unprecedented clarity.

Smolker was initially attracted to dolphins for the reasons that attract so many people to them: an elusive sense of their intelligence and their social and emotional complexity, a sense that despite the fact that we live in such entirely different worlds, dolphins are somehow like us. Now, after years of fascinating, inspiring, sometimes troubling, and occasionally heartbreaking experiences with the dolphins of Monkey Mia, Smolker is able to unravel many of the mysteries surrounding these beloved animals.

To Touch a Wild Dolphin is a personal book in many ways, at the level of the dolphins and also at the level of the scientist. It is an important book, one that greatly enhances our understanding of dolphins and of ourselves, and as such it will take its place alongside such classics as Farley Mowat's **Never Cry Wolf** and Jane Goodall's **In the Shadow of Man**.

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