

A Transformative Interspecies Experience with Dolphins

by Linda Sechrist

This month's Natural Pet focuses on how animals, which are traditionally antagonistic species, can cross boundaries and develop loving friendships. Positive outcomes from interspecies communication have inspired humans, such as Wildquest—the Human-Dolphin Connection Company, to create circumstances, which support such an ideal for the good of all humanity.

Recently, The Yoga Center of Medford (YCOM) partnered with WildQuest to sponsor an interspecies connection—a Dolphin Dream Retreat in Bimini, the westernmost district of the Bahamas.

The WildQuest team, which invites the public to swim freely with non-captive dolphins, combines yoga, breathwork, meditation, healthy food and a supportive environment to help participants expand, relax and regain a feeling of harmony with and connection to nature.

Alaine Portner, YCOM founder, tells *Natural Awakenings* a tale of her recent dolphin swim retreat and transformative interspecies experience.

How did this experience unfold for you?

Like the other 11 truth seekers on the retreat, I found that once I gave myself permission to take a vacation it automatically improved my buoyancy factor. The playfulness, insightfulness and perpetual smiles of the WildQuest catamaran team added to my sense of weightlessness.

During the first morning yoga class, I had an epiphany and shared it with the class: It isn't what the dolphins are going to do for us rather it is what's going to happen "through us". I suggested that we make ourselves available but not wanting, and that we be in the moment with the dolphins when they arrived.

As the days and amazing dolphin encounters continued, along with daily yoga classes, special energy work, and a unified focus on the breath, our "human pod" transitioned. Everyone looked a little lighter as their muscles and minds relaxed.

On the day dedicated to exploring The Legendary Lost Land of Atlantis, everyone in our pod wore a symbolic dolphin tail charm around the neck. I asked Atmo, the captain and dolphin guru, to bless my charm and my friend, April's. He smiled and played along willingly.

On the day of your profound experience, how did you find and connect with the dolphins?

As the dolphin-seeking hours were diminishing, I heard April using sounds to call the dolphins. All of us on the boat joined arms and began to sing to the dolphins while holding the intention to be fully present, stay in the flow and not be wanting or expecting anything. Within a short time, a dolphin pair was spotted splashing through the waters about



a half-mile away from the boat. On the catamaran deck, dancing replaced chants when the dolphin team also saw the Spotted Dolphins. In a matter of minutes, our human pod prepared their snorkeling gear for a final dive. After the captain read the temperament of the dolphins, April and I held hands and slid from the boat into the water.

Why was this particular dolphin encounter so special for you?

The dolphins came to play—one swam under us and one swam above. I became entranced with the high-pitched squeaks and spiraling lights around the dolphins' heads and wondered if they were the result of sonar waves. The exchange lasted only minutes, but our dance together felt everlasting.

When I returned to the boat, I had a reaction that felt like an electrocution and my shaking, nausea, confusion and tears were uncontrollable. As a multitude of emotional waves passed through me for an hour, I searched my mind for a reasonable explanation—did I swim too close to the dolphins, or as an empath, was I feeling their sense of gratitude for intuiting my 30-year commitment to vegetarianism? Eventually a member of the crew asked, is every human emotion running through your body and did you feel "charged" by the dolphins? I answered yes to both questions and was told that my "sonar" encounter had happened to only a few others at Wildquest.

The crew member reminded me of my epiphany during the first yoga class: It is what the dolphins are doing through us not just for us. Later Captain Atmo told me that I had been "dolphinized".

My experience has led me to believe that by questioning our relationships and reaffirming our connections to nature, we can find answers to our personal and planetary problems. Like me, the yoga pod from Medford claims they will never be the same.

As our euphoric wave continues, we at YCOM quest to find more "dolfriends" who are interested in joining us for a WildQuest experience in September 2012.

