

Presented at the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual International Marine Animal Trainers Association Conference,  
Indianapolis, Indiana (2007)

**CONTACTING CASTAWAY: TRAINING A WILD, DEAF, OFFSHORE ATLANTIC  
BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (TURSIOPS TRUNCATUS)**

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Castaway, a wild, deaf offshore Atlantic bottlenose dolphin, stranded on Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>, 2006 in Vero Beach, FL. Diagnosed as deaf shortly after her arrival at the Marine Mammal Conservancy (MMC) (Jan 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007), Castaway was thereafter deemed non-releasable by National Marine Fisheries Service. Husbandry and training personnel from both MMC and Dolphin's Plus, Inc. began the process of formal training for her future in a managed care facility.

Castaway's neurological impairment, compounded with her hearing loss, presented a challenge concerning how MMC and Dolphin's Plus staffs were to establish communication with this animal. The staffs began target training to build a solid foundation. Training issues arose such as; how to call her to station for feeds, how to bridge a non-auditory animal, how to establish pattern recognition in an animal that presents with mental limitations, as well as how to establish an enriching environment for an animal whose behavior appears unconventional.

The staff initiated a hand held strobe light for calling her to station. Utilizing Castaway's visual dominance, the staff came upon using a point bridge to illustrate the completion of a successful behavior. While training Castaway to participate in multiple husbandry behaviors, the staff continues to implement unique training methods and Castaway continues to make marked progress.

Castaway was relocated to Dolphins Plus on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Having established stable communication levels, Castaway and staff are both moving forward in her training endeavors. She currently resides with the existing population of *Tursiops truncatus* at Dolphins Plus, providing them with a unique research and training opportunity.