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FROM

L. Danner

Thank you for informing me of the killer whale stranding in Samborombon Bay beach in November of 1992, and your efforts to rehabilitate the animal at your facility. I am happy to hear that the animal is now doing well.

It would be very difficult to reintroduce this whale successfully back into the wild, if it could be done at all. Any reintroduction program would require a long-term and expensive effort, followed by a long period of monitoring the whale thereafter through radio-transmitters if you wish to know the status of the animal. In no way can it be recommended to simply place the animal back into the waters near where it stranded. Even with the best of efforts, the outcome could be the death of the animal.

The most extensive studies of killer whales have been made in Puget Sound in Washington State and near Vancouver, Canada. These studies reveal that there are two types of pods--residents and transients. The residents can be found within the same general area from month to month and year to year. In contrast, the transients are only seen occasionally and their whereabouts otherwise are generally not known. The whale that stranded in Samborombon Bay and that is now in your facility may well be from a transient pod. If so, the whereabouts of its other pod members would be unknown, and its reintroduction would be even more perilous. Without the support of other pod members, the lone orca would have immense difficulty in locating and capturing prey, and may likely starve or become so weakened that it would succumb to illness.

From my own experience with bottlenosed dolphins, it is clear that without an extensive retraining and readaptation period, death is very likely, and may be preceded by a period of high stress. Hence, my opinion is that the best decision for the orca in question is to continue to maintain it at your facility, making every effort to provide it with the best possible environment, paying attention to its social needs and providing intellectual stimulation as well as good physical care.

I will remain very interested in knowing how things do develop with this animal.

My best regards to you and to the rest of the staff at Mundo Marino. I still remember the warm hospitality we received during our visit.