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Dancing with the Wild Dolphins of Bimini

By *Jillian Morris Brake* on June 12, 2014 [@SharkyJillian](#)

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Jillian photographing wild dolphins. PHOTO CREDIT: Jillian Rutledge.

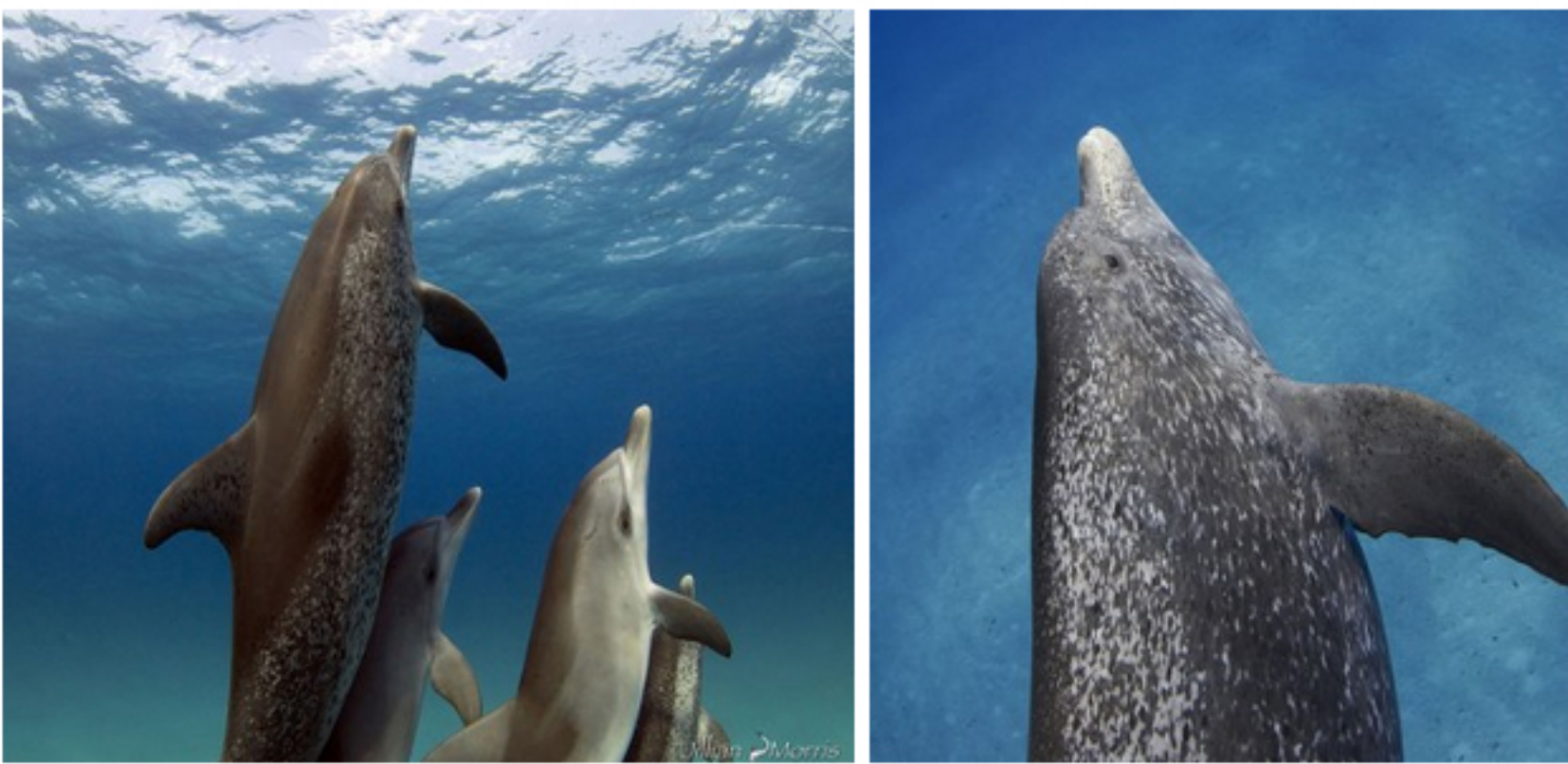
As the bow of our boat slices through the crystal clear waters, we scan the horizon for fins. Bimini is famous for its eclectic history, but it is also known around the world for its amazing wild dolphins. Both bottlenose and Atlantic spotted are encountered frequently and offer visitors a unique glimpse into the lives of these fascinating creatures.

Several fins break the surface and we slowly motor in their direction. They immediately move into the wake of the boat and one even leaps into the air behind us. The boat slows and we gear up with masks, fins and snorkels. I slide into the water quickly and quietly and immediately dive downwards towards the white sand bottom. This has piqued their interest and curiosity brings two Atlantic spotted dolphins to my side. We spiral back towards the surface, enjoying the freedom of the sea. I take a few breaths and dive again. A single juvenile darts towards me, dancing effortlessly as I hold my breath in order to spend a fleeting moment in their world. A bit of a misnomer, spots are absent from the juveniles until they are about four years old. One of the juveniles seems to enjoy the noise from my camera or maybe it has caught a glimpse of its reflection in the dome port. A second juvenile zooms in for a photo bomb, as if to say, "Look at me. Look at me." I laugh underwater as I ascend again.

We play these games for over thirty minutes before the dolphins lose interest and head on to find something more entertaining. Everyone on the boat, even the most die hard shark fans, is laughing and reveling in the experience. I will unabashedly admit my preference of sharks to dolphins, but these wild encounters with these charismatic creatures are truly remarkable. This is not an aquarium experience with the dolphins behaving on queue, but completely in their world and on their terms. I have had swims last five minutes to over five hours, depending on the mood of the animals.

It is very rare to actually have a true, non-food induced interaction with a wild animal. I spend a lot of time filming and observing wildlife and even for me these moments are few and far between. I have been fortunate enough to spend hundreds of hours in the water with Bimini's beautiful dolphins and I have seen adults of all ages (right up to age eighty-nine) revert back to childhood as they laugh and smile so big their mask leaks. You most definitely need to add laugh, dance and dive with wild dolphins to your Bucket List and Bimini is the perfect place to do it.

You can book your own wild dolphin encounter with the Bimini Sands recreation center, [Neal Watson's Bimini Scuba Center](#) or [Bimini Adventures](#). For a multiple day trip or liveaboard option you can check out [Dolphin Expeditions](#) or [WildQuest](#).



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Jillian Morris Brake

Executive Director & Education Coordinator at [Oceanicallstars](#)

Jillian Morris Brake, an ocean educator, advocate and explorer. "In this underwater world I wear many hats, which makes each day completely different from the last and keeps me on my toes. I am a free diver, scuba instructor, photographer, educator, outreach coordinator, rebreather diver, videographer, writer, underwater model, marine biologist and ocean advocate. "

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