

Just how smart are whales?

Whales have long been a profound mystery to us. They live in a world so removed from our own that we can barely imagine their lives. Their environment is different, their senses are different, their relationships are different.

What goes on inside those vast heads? How might such almost alien creatures see the world? How might they think? New science is beginning to give us some answers.

Marine biologist and filmmaker Rick Rosenthal is on a journey to explore these insights, measuring the latest science against his own observations and long-held beliefs—and just maybe, getting a glimpse of the world as it must seem to these ocean giants.

Captured on camera for the first time in 'Whale Wisdom', Rick films the astonishing behaviour of a humpback whale which, time and again, manages to outwit humans in order to get what she wants—their fish. She brilliantly thwarts each attempt by the managers of a salmon hatchery to keep her away. Her coup de grace—slipping in and out unseen into an enclosure barely bigger than herself.

In Norway, 'Whale Wisdom' captures hunting techniques of humpback whales showing they have learned to interpret

another species' feeding calls—orcas—for their own benefit. The humpbacks, alerted by the orcas' calls, wait for them to herd herring into tight schools, then sweep in and swallow the entire shoal.

Whales seem to experience fun, too. The camera team captures adult grey whales surfing the breakers, spending hours of each day riding waves at the surf break, stopping only when the tide changes and the waves subside.

And whales share songs. Humpback whales sing, and in the course of a season, a favourite "hit song" emerges. That song is passed from whale to whale, until eventually it's being sung by all the humpback males in the Southern Pacific Ocean. 'Whale Wisdom' uses ultrasonography mapping to illustrate the scientists' recording of one whale learning the song from another. Researchers believe the songs contain important information, possibly about their migrations, which is shared when the song is transferred—a cultural exchange among whales.

Filmed entirely in 4K from above and below the surface using boats, kayaks and drones, and working with respected whale scientists and researchers, Rick Rosenthal shines a light on the culture and wisdom of whales.



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4K WHALE WISDOM

1 x 50 min. Directed by Rick Rosenthal

4K, 5.1 and Stereo Executive producers: Susanne Lummer, Sabine Holzer

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