

Sea Kayaking

Channel Islands National Park

Santa Cruz Island

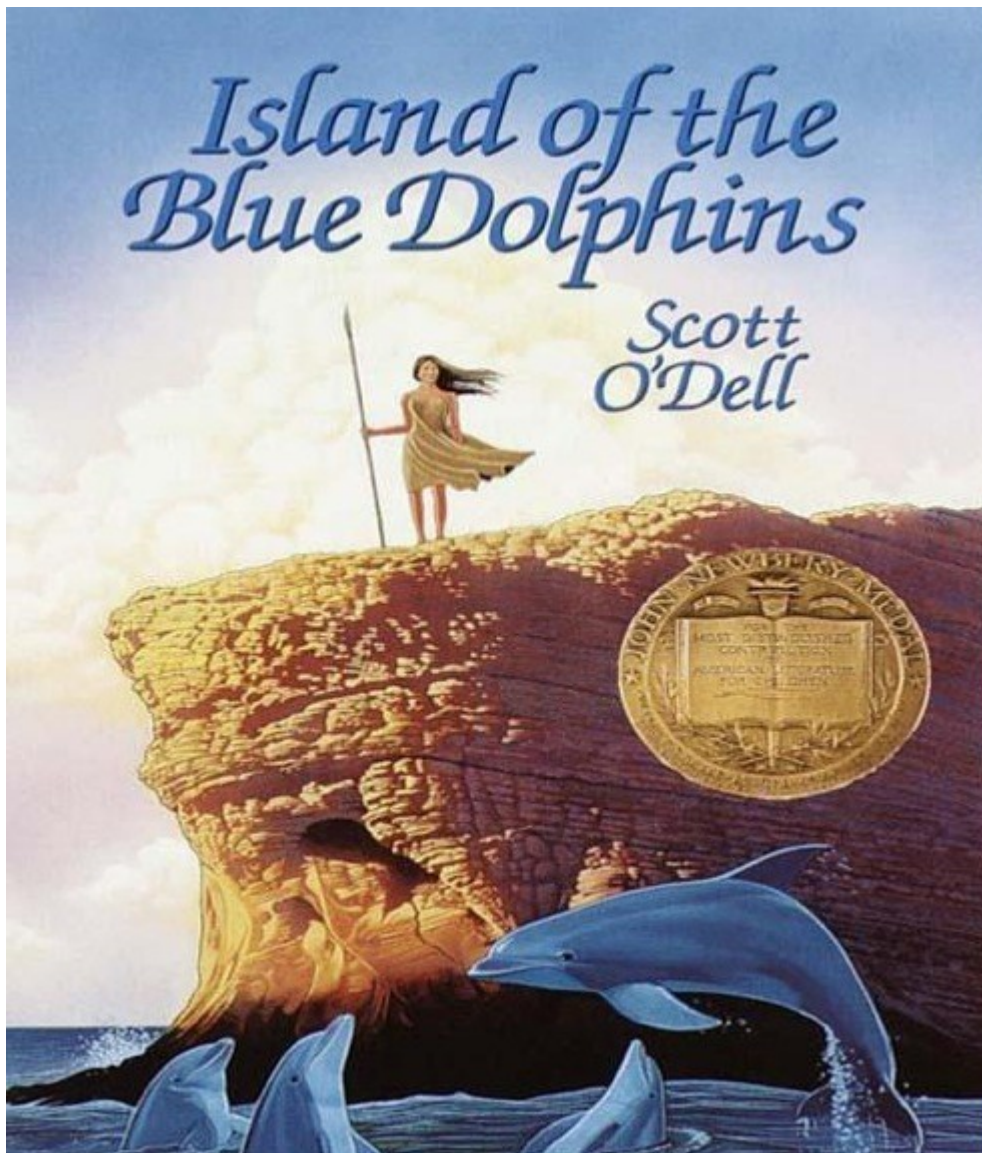
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What's new on the Channel Islands? A brand-new visitor center

Was anyone else out there obsessed with ISLAND OF THE BLUE DOLPHINS as a kid?? You know which one I'm talking about...the Native American girl marooned on one of the Channel Islands? Written by Scott O'Dell in 1960 and especially popular with 13-year old girls?? This cover look familiar?



Yeah, well I was. I wanted NOTHING more than to be marooned on an island (alone! or at least without my seriously annoying younger brother and sister) to become the female version of Robinson Crusoe (Robin Crusoe? Anyway, I also loved Swiss Family Robinson, so you catch the theme I was into...)

Well, I finally got to live my dream this weekend (or probably about as close as I'm gonna get to it). Technically I wasn't marooned, and I didn't get to use a spear, but I finally got to visit one of the mythical Channel Islands...I took an Island Packers ferry from Ventura Harbor and made the hour+ trip to Santa Cruz Island (the largest of the 5 islands in the national park) for an Aquasports kayak trip to explore the sea caves and the island perimeter.



Definitely got a tad nauseous on the trip across the water, but seeing HUNDREDS of dolphins riding in the ferry's wake made up for the churning stomach.

Here's one of us heading into one of the awesome sea caves (excuse the drip on the camera lens, but action shots can get messy...)



And here's Tony, our guide (who's the closest thing to Robinson Crusoe that I've yet to come upon...)



There's no commercial development on the island, so the brand new visitor center on Santa Cruz is big news. It just opened last month, and it's got exhibits that teach you all about the island's Chumash Indian history, it's cattle and sheep ranching days in the 1800s, how the island's eagles were repopulated, etc. (Did you know that they grew Zinfandel grapes on the island during the ranch days?!) Definitely worth checking out on your next visit. And if you can't get there anytime soon, you can at least watch the live eagle cam!



The Channel Islands had a lot to live up to (competing with images from a favorite childhood book is tough), but Santa Cruz Island actually exceeded my expectations. Sea caves, dolphins, whale sightings, clear water...it really was the island of the blue dolphins....



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