

Former Russian Spy Whale Faces His Greatest Danger

'Russian spy' whale lost in Oslo, Norway – city of over one million people. Massive crowds and boat traffic create the 'perfect storm' for tragedy to occur.

OSLO, NORWAY, May 24, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Hvaldimir, known worldwide as the 'Russian spy' beluga whale, is now lost in the industrial ports of the capitol city of Oslo – which has a population of over one million people. Massive crowds eager to see the whale, heavy boat traffic and warming weather are creating the 'perfect storm' for tragedy to occur.



Hvaldimir when he first arrived in Hammerfest wearing a harness

Hvaldimir first arrived in Hammerfest, Norway in April 2019 wearing a harness that read 'Equipment St. Petersburg.' It is believed he was part of a Russian marine mammal military program for several years. He is a friendly, tamed, displaced, formerly captive whale who has been living all alone since his arrival in the country. Hvaldimir seeks out humans for his social needs and due to that behavior has been severely injured multiple times by boat propellers and foreign objects.

“

With swift action Hvaldimir could transition from being a symbol of inhumane animal treatment to a great ambassador of compassion between humans and marine life, but only if we're able to act quickly.”

Rich German

To help protect him, the nonprofit organization OneWhale created a public safety program and has been on-site with Hvaldimir since the summer of 2021. OneWhale Founder Regina Crosby Haug recalls, “Because of his incredible

charm, his viral fame grew quickly which multiplied the public's interest to see him in person. Totally understandable, however there were no guardrails around him, just hundreds of people and lots of boats - a risky situation for both the humans and the whale. We put on yellow vests, enlisted volunteers and showed up. This is what Team Hvaldimir still does every day.”

The initiative has been successful in creating safety practices and education around Hvaldimir, however, it cannot prevent the potential disaster he is now facing. According to OneWhale President Rich German, “Without proper intervention it is only a matter of time before Hvaldimir gets seriously injured again or killed. He did not choose to be in this predicament. Hvaldimir needs and deserves help.”

In a measure to provide short term protection, OneWhale is formulating an emergency transport plan to move Hvaldimir far north to arctic waters. OneWhale is in contact with the Norwegian authorities whose permission is required to intervene on behalf of the whale.

“We are very hopeful the authorities will agree to move Norway’s beloved beluga to safety. Norwegians have fallen in love with Hvaldimir and have compassion for his incredible story,” says Haug.

In an effort to provide protection and rehabilitation for Hvaldimir, OneWhale has partnered with the town of Hammerfest and together they are creating the Norwegian Whale Reserve. When finished, the massive 500-acre marine reserve would be a safe place for Hvaldimir to live until an attempt can be made to release him back into a wild beluga population. The reserve will also be a home for other whales who will be released from captivity.

There are presently over 300 belugas and 56 orcas confined in concrete tanks around the world. As laws and attitudes change in favor of whales having freedom, many of these animals will need an ocean home and the Norwegian Whale Reserve can be a solution for many of them. According to German, “With swift action Hvaldimir could transition from being a symbol of



Here's Hvaldimir next to a boat at a salmon farm



Hvaldimir in a very unnatural setting in Oslo

inhumane animal treatment to a great ambassador of compassion between humans and marine life, but only if we're able to act quickly."

Discussions between OneWhale and the authorities in Oslo continue.

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