

From Putin's War Machine to a New Life in Norway - Hvaldimir the Beluga Whale Shows He's Born to be Wild

Hvaldimir the whale escaped from Russia's Navy and his future is being charted by scientists and veterinarians at charity OneWhale with Norway's government.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, February 7, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Hvaldimir the whale escaped from the Russian Navy, and his future is being charted by the scientists and veterinarians at charity OneWhale in conjunction with the Norwegian government.

For years, the headlines have read, "nobody knows what to do with him," but now hope is on the horizon for Hvaldimir. After years of uncertainty, his future is being charted by the Norwegians, along with the scientists and veterinarians of his non-profit, OneWhale.

At OneWhale, the mission is to protect Hvaldimir, while the organization advocates for his future in the wild with other belugas, so that he is no longer lost and alone.

It has been a long, uncertain path toward freedom. First, he had to escape. In April of 2019, a beluga whale was first sighted by fishermen in northern Norway wearing a harness. He tugged at the local fisherman's boat fenders to get their attention.

Once freed, everyone expected the whale to swim away, but the friendly creature instead swam to Hammerfest, Norway, where he was named Hvaldimir by locals. Arriving into Norway at the same time, American filmmaker Regina Crosby Haug began documenting the whale and investigating his mysterious past.



While filming, Crosby Haug realized Hvaldimir's life was at risk. "Here was a beautiful, innocent soul, who didn't choose any of this." She recalls. Soon after she created OneWhale, a non-profit with the mission to protect Hvaldimir. Although OneWhale's focus is on getting Hvaldimir back into the wild, other organizations have offered proposals to place Hvaldimir in captivity or leave him at risk.

Yet so many unanswered questions remained about this whale's past. Was he really a military whale, or simply a therapy whale as once reported? Many people laughed at the notion that

Russia's spying was a threat. However, in February of 2022, that changed, and the world looked on in shock as Russia invaded Ukraine. Other countries bordering Russia were suddenly on high alert, including Norway.

Within months, there were reports of dolphins being used in Russia's war machine. And soon undersea explosions crippled Nord Stream 1 & 2 gas pipelines. Could it have been by trained whales who mapped out the sea-floor with cameras? Or even forced to plant the explosives?

Although Hvaldimir was free, he was not safe. He has been struck by propellers and boats, and in the Spring 2023, Hvaldimir suddenly traveled hundreds of miles to Oslo, Norway's capital. Experts theorized that he is now of mating age and actively searching for other whales. Hvaldimir soon became emaciated due to a lack of food in the industrial waters. Crosby Haug recalls, "Those months could have been a death sentence to Hvaldimir, but we reached out to Norway's Directorate of Fisheries and have been working on a solution ever since."

The solution, backed by scientists, veterinarians, and NOAH, Norway's largest animal rights organization, allows Hvaldimir to be relocated to the arctic islands off the coast of Norway, which is home to over 500 wild belugas.

Victoria Pine Vinje, a Norwegian Marine Biologist, and arctic whale scientist explains "Belugas are known for highly social and welcoming behavior, so Hvaldimir should have a good chance of integrating."

Frank Bakke Jensen, the Director of The Fisheries Directorate, indicated that they are willing to allow Hvaldimir's move to a wild pod. "I am open to the idea if OneWhale and its partners can secure the necessary permits and funds." Says Jensen.



Hvaldimir (Photo Credit: OneWhale)

But time could be running out for Hvaldimir. He is currently living on southwest coast of Norway and the spring mating season is coming fast. Crosby Haug explains, "We're doing everything possible to be ready, hoping that 2024 will be Hvaldimir's year."

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