



## Dolphin (Bottle-nosed)



**Bottle-nosed Dolphin:**

*Tursiops truncatus*

**Distribution:**

Three subspecies: one in the North Pacific, one in the Atlantic and one in the Red sea.

**Size:**

Length: 2.3-3.9m; Weight: 150-275kg.

**Life span:**

Up to 50 years.

They are social animals, and live for most of the year in single-sex groups, but males, females and young live together during the breeding season.

**Food:**

Salmon, anchovy, capelin  
and other inshore fish, as well as squid and shrimp.

Bottle nosed dolphins are commonly sighted around the British Isles, where they are seen mainly in seas to the south and west.

When fish are moving in large shoals, large groups of dolphins form to herd the fish into a mass on which they can feed at leisure. The dolphins whistle directions to each other and it is thought that they also direct loud noises at the fish to confuse them. When the shoals are scarce, individual dolphins hunt at night for bottom-dwelling fish and squid. They can feed at depths of up to 280m, can dive to 600m and stay underwater for up to 15 minutes between breaths.

**Communication:**

They communicate by a series of whistles and clicks, and though experts are unsure of how complex this communication is, individual dolphins can definitely recognise and respond to each other. Like all dolphins, they use echolocation to form a 'picture' of their surroundings in murky water. They emit a series of loud clicks which travel through the water until if the sound hits a solid object, an echo is bounced off it and returns to the dolphin, which is then able to interpret the sounds into a map of its surrounding environment.

**Breeding:**

Bottle-nosed dolphins mate in the spring and summer, and females give birth to single calves about 10-12 months later. Although they are capable of giving birth unaided, two or more 'midwives' often help with the delivery by tugging at the newborn's tail and whistling encouragement. They also protect the vulnerable mother and her calf from sharks.

## **Dolphins and humans**

When dolphins and humans fish in the same area, there can be conflict. Many thousands of dolphins drown in fishing nets each year. However, bottle-nosed dolphins also entertain humans, as they are the species most commonly trained in dolphinaria. Questions have been raised as to whether keeping dolphins in captivity is cruel. Some trainers build up strong relationships with their dolphins, but keeping any animals such as dolphins in captivity is questionable, as no pool, no matter how large can ever be the same as the open ocean.

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