

DOLPHINS



Dolphins are cetaceans like whales. They are very intelligent, amazing creatures.



Food:

Dolphins are active predators and eat a wide variety of fish, squid and crustaceans.

Habitat:

Dolphins usually inhabit warm-temperate and tropical waters.



Species of dolphin found in NW Scotland:

- Common
- Bottlenose
- Orca
- Risso's
- White beaked





Common Dolphins

Adult common dolphins are between 1.7 - 2.5 m long and weigh from 100-140 kg. They live in pods ranging in size from around 10 up to 'superpods' of over 3 000. However, in UK waters we tend to get smaller pods of common dolphins, usually between 10 and 30 animals. We do sometimes get hundreds of dolphins, even up to 500, but superpods tend to happen only in warmer waters.

The pod will send out scouts to find fish and then the scouts will report back to the pod and the pod will split up into groups and hunt for fish.

Short beaked common dolphins can swim up to around 18mph (ref: *Encyclopaedia of Marine Mammals*) when they want to.

Bottlenose Dolphins

Adult common bottlenose dolphins are often known just as bottlenose dolphins, to avoid confusion with common dolphins. They are around 2-4 m long. Bottlenose dolphins on the west coast of Scotland are some of the largest in the world! They can weigh around 400kg.

Bottlenose dolphins can swim up to 260 m below the surface of the ocean. However, they need quick access to air on the surface, therefore bottlenose dolphins usually are shallow divers that stay close to the surface.





Orcas/Killer whales

Orcas are often mistaken as whales – but, despite their name, “Killer Whales” are actually dolphins. Orcas are the largest and fastest swimming species of dolphin. A killer whale sprinting travels six times faster than an Olympic swimmer going top speed in a race!

Orcas distinctive black-and-white coloration makes them easy to recognise. They can be seen in coastal waters off the west coast of Scotland and the Northern Isles. Some groups of Orca feed on fish, while others target seals.

In the UK we have a small unique group of killer whales called the West Coast Community, these are the UK’s only resident group. Other groups also travel through, but they are not resident as they also spend time in Iceland and Norway. The West Coast Community is thought to only have a maximum of eight individuals left.

The BBC once visited Scotland and filmed killer whales from the West Coast Community hunting a porpoise.





Risso's

FACT FILE

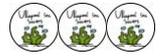
Size	Up to 3.8 m
Weight	Up to 500 kg
Teeth	Risso's rarely have teeth in the upper jaw, but have 4-14 teeth at the front of the bottom jaw for grasping squid
Diet	Mainly squid, with some octopus and cuttlefish
Habitat	Deep water, sometimes coastal in the Hebrides
Life Span	At least 30 years

White beaked

FACT FILE

Size	Around 2.8 m
Weight	Up to 350 kg
Teeth	Up to 112
Diet	Varied diet including small schooling fish like sandeels and herring to larger fish like cod, whiting and haddock, as well as squid and crustaceans
Habitat	Open water
Life Span	Life expectancy of white-beaked dolphins is unknown





Common dolphins in Loch Broom

Despite their name, common dolphins were once a rare site in Scotland. However, over



Photo Credit: LivingSeas/N. Hawkins



Photo Credit LivingSeas/N. Hawkins

the last ten years they have become increasingly common in the waters of western

Scotland and are seen frequently around Ullapool and in Loch Broom – they are now even seen during the winter, when we wouldn't expect to see them. Scientists believe that this could be due to the sea warming, which means that the dolphins can travel further north than before.





Threats

Dolphins face several threats. These are the main ones, and sadly they are all threats from humans:

- over fishing
- bycatch
- entanglement
- chemical pollution
- collisions
- noise pollution
- disturbance
- captivity

Over-fishing



Over-fishing is a problem for dolphins if the fish are all gone the dolphins won't survive.

Bycatch

Trawling is also a problem for dolphins because dolphins get tangled up in the nets, that's why we should always buy dolphin friendly or rod caught fish.

Bycatch is a big problem for dolphins. It is the most common cause of death for cetaceans in the UK, and the worst-affected species are harbour porpoises and common dolphins. Common dolphins are most affected by mid-water trawling.





Entanglement

When animals get lines, nets or rubbish wrapped around their body this is known as entanglement. Entanglement is a big problem for whales in Scotland and other parts of the world. Dolphins can also get entangled for example in rubbish. In Scotland, lots of people are working to understand the problem and try to find solutions, this includes fishermen, charities and scientists.

Entanglement is a big problem for dolphins but, luckily, we have made lots of progress on it (check out the work of BDMLR to find out more!)



The worst type of net for dolphins are drift nets because dolphins are often at the surface of the water.

Chemical pollution

When ingested, chemicals can build up in dolphin blubber. All marine life can suffer due to chemical pollution, but it is often the dolphins that suffer from this the worst, and that is because



they are at the top of the food chain. One example of this is a killer whale that eats seals. Seals feed





on lots of fish, which may have small amounts of pollution in them. These chemicals build up over time in the seals blubber, as it eats more and more fish. Now, think about the killer whale that eats thousands of seals over its lifetime. Each time it eats a seal, it is building up more and more chemicals in its own blubber and when these reach a certain level they start to cause problems for the animal, making them more likely to get diseases and infections.

Collisions



Collisions with shipping vessels, marine renewable devices and other infrastructure can cause lots of problems for dolphins.

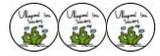
Noise pollution

The noises made by marine traffic, seismic testing for oil and gas, military activities, construction, acoustic deterrent devices and other sources can cause injury and disturbance.

NOISE POLLUTION

Dolphins use sound to communicate, so too much noise can be a real problem for these animals. It can make it hard for them to find one another,





hunt for food or navigate. As a result, dolphins may be harmed (strand on beaches) or may be disturbed and move away from an area. Loud noises can also cause injury.

Disturbance

While it's great to see dolphins and whales from a boat, too much attention from boats can disturb and displace them from feeding areas. Ullapool Sea Savers would like to ask everyone involved in wildlife watching to do Wise training, to make sure they disturb the animals as little as possible. For more details go to:



<https://www.wisescheme.org/>

Captivity

Some times dolphins are captured and ether put in aquariums or trained for shows which can upset the dolphins and make them agitated or confused.

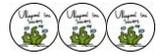




Did you know?

- Dolphins are carnivores
- Dolphins are very intelligent
- A dolphin's baby is called a calf
- Dolphins are mammals
- Dolphins breathe through blow holes
- A group of dolphins is called a pod
- Orcas are actually dolphins
- Dolphins have 2-3 stomach compartments
- Dolphins are the only animals to give birth with the baby coming out tail first
- Just a tablespoon of water in a dolphin's lung can drown it
- Dolphins use echolocation
- Dolphins have conical shaped teeth – the number of teeth changes a lot between species, which can be helpful when needing to identify stranded animals
 - Bottlenose dolphins have about 100
 - Common dolphins have up to 216,
 - Rissos's dolphins only have 4-14
- Bottlenose dolphins give themselves names. They develop individual whistles and tones –. They usually choose their own signature whistle by their first birthday! Killer whales make even more complex sounds.
- Dolphins don't breathe automatically like humans
- The blow hole of a dolphin is an adapted nose which has moved to the top of its head
- Research shows that dolphins are “re-entrants” and lived on land before adapting to water





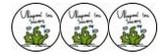
How you can help:

You can help scientists learn more about dolphins by reporting any that you see.

Reporting is quick and easy using the free Whale Track app on your phone. Find out more:

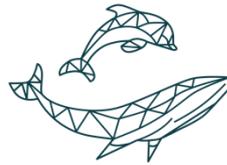
whaletrack.hwdt.org





Josh and the Ullapool Sea Savers would like to thank the following people for their support making this fact file:

Pippa at the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust



Hebridean
Whale &
Dolphin
Trust

Noel Hawkins at Living Seas Scotland



www.ullapoolseasavers.com

