

Common bottlenose dolphin

(Tursiops truncatus)

For more information see <https://www.handbook.iwc.int/en/>

Adult length: 2.5-3.8m
Adult weight: up to 260kg (female) or 500 kg (male)
Newborn: up to 1.4/14-20 kg

Colour varies from dark brown to grey or black, depending on light conditions. In some populations, there is a distinctly darker 'cape' over the dorsal fin and back

The dorsal fin is usually tall and falcate (but can be more triangular in some animals)



A sharp crease between the beak and the forehead

Thick tail stock

Males and females are difficult to distinguish at sea – but only females will accompany calves, and males may have more scarring from aggressive interactions with other males.

A pronounced short and stocky 'beak'

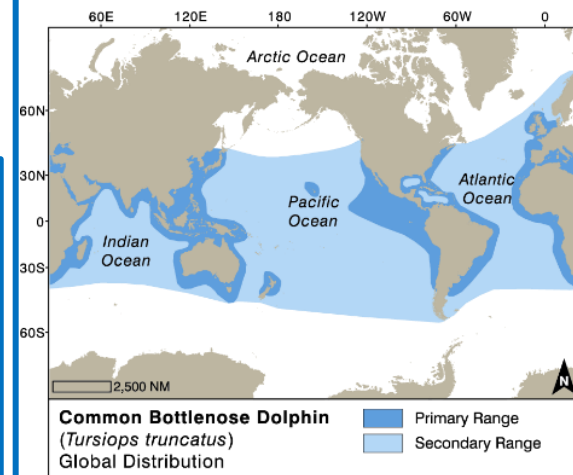
Moderately long dark slender flippers with pointed tips and a broad base

Underside can be off-white, light grey or light pink

Illustration and maps, provided courtesy of the IWC Online Whale Watching Handbook: www.handbook.iwc.int

Threats: bycatch, pollutants, coastal development, habitat degradation, hunting, live capture for aquaria
Habitat: estuarine, nearshore, continental shelf, offshore
Diet: fish, crustaceans, squid
IUCN Conservation status: Least Concern

Distribution: Common bottlenose dolphins are found throughout the world's temperate and tropical oceans and seas. There are likely multiple subspecies, that range from nearshore areas to coastal shelf or deep offshore waters. In central and west Africa their range often overlaps with Atlantic humpback dolphins.



Common bottlenose dolphin global distribution. Adapted by Nina Lisowski from Jefferson, T.A., Webber, M.A. and Pitman, R.L. (2015). "Marine Mammals of the World: A Comprehensive Guide to Their Identification," 2nd ed. Elsevier, San Diego, CA. Copyright Elsevier: <http://www.elsevier.com>.

Common bottlenose dolphins are often found close to shore as well as in deeper offshore waters. In both habitats they can come in contact with human activity, such as fishing, offshore oil and gas development, or ports and harbours. They can be acrobatic, and are the species most likely to 'bowride' with ships and smaller boats (Photos courtesy of Caroline Weir, Ketos Ecology.)



Bottlenose dolphin seen through the water from the bow of a boat.



Leaping bottlenose dolphin.



Individual bottlenose dolphins can be recognised by the nicks and scars on their dorsal fins, through a process called photo-identification. Some dolphins in well-studied populations have been re-sighted over periods of more than 40 years. (photos Gianna Minton/WWF Gabon)