

BIOLOGY & ECOLOGY OF DOLPHINS

- Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins are a coastal species that are often found in surf zones, estuaries and bays through the temperate, subtropical and tropical regions of Australia and the great Indo-Pacific region.
- Distinguished by their large curved dorsal fin, grey dorsal colouration and white ventral surface colouration. Adults can have speckling on the underbelly that increases with age.
- Dolphins are warm-blooded marine mammals and breathe air.
- Dolphins can hold their breath for up to 15 minutes.
- Dolphins are carnivorous and feed on a variety of sea life including fish and squid.
- A layer of fatty tissue under the skin, called blubber, maintains the dolphin's body heat. This layer of fat also provides an important energy source.
- Dolphins have very good eyesight both below and above the water.
- Dolphins give birth to live young after a gestation period of around 12 months.
- Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins grow to 2.6m and weigh 230kg when mature. At birth, calves are around 1m in length and weight between 9 and 21kg.
- A bottlenose dolphin calf will drink milk for at least 6 months and remain with its mother for up to 4 years.
- Age of maturity varies between genders, with female bottlenose dolphins reaching maturity between 8 to 10 years and males between 10 to 12 years of age.
- Dolphins can live for over 50 years.

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN SOCIETIES

- Dolphins are very social animals and live in complex societies that can often have a dominance hierarchy and are sexually segregated.
- Mature males may form a strongly bonded alliance with at least four other males.
- Females live in large groups and maintain a large network of associates within their home range.
- Dolphins display many different types of behaviours including leaping, surfing, bow riding, bow and tail-slapping.

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN COMMUNICATION

- Dolphins produce a diverse range of sounds that include echolocation or sonar clicks, whistles, burst pulse sounds such as 'squawks' and 'squeaks'.
- 'Whistles' are thought to be used to maintain contact, identify, and to locate other dolphins.
- 'Clicks' are used for echolocation, assisting in navigation and feeding.

THREATS TO DOLPHINS

- Marine mammals such as dolphins are protected in Australian waters, however, their future remains uncertain.
- The largest threats to dolphins in Australia are human pollution and habitat degradation including noise pollution, coastal development, litter, land-based run-off, shipping and vessel activities.
- Around the world dolphins are under threat from interactions with fisheries activities; tuna fishing, gill netting and drift netting industries.





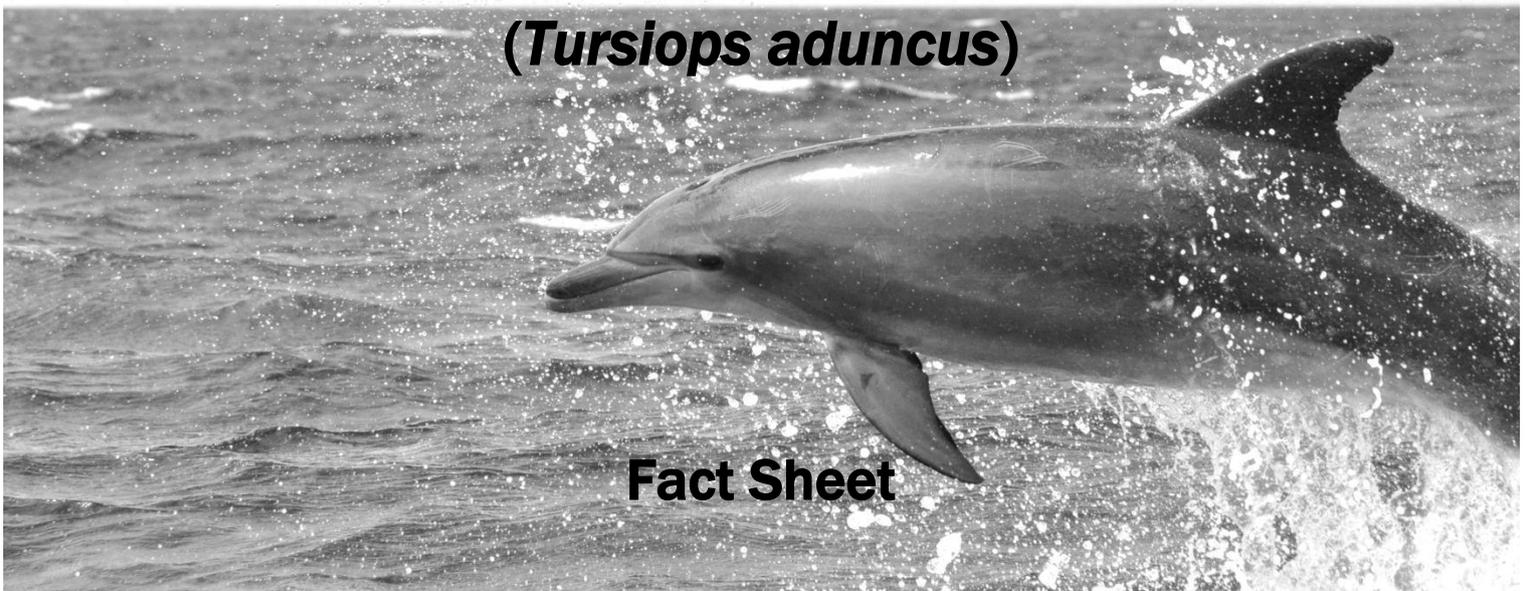
- Each of us can make a difference to help ensure the survival of marine mammals and other animals for future generations.
- Pick up any rubbish on the beaches or near drains and dispose of properly.
- Purchase sustainably fished seafood products.
- Do not pour hazardous waste down the drain.
- Do not feed dolphins.
- Use biodegradable products.
- Reduce-reuse-recycle your garbage.
- Be a responsible swimmer and boater and abide by dolphin-watching regulations.
- When fishing, take any discarded line, bait packaging etc. with you when you leave and abide by marine parks fishing rules.
- Set a good example for others in your use and enjoyment of the marine environment.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PROTECT THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT?



Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphins

(Tursiops aduncus)



Fact Sheet