

Australian Humpback Dolphin

Sousa sahulensis

Distinguishing Features

- Adults can reach up to 2.75 meters in length and weigh 260kg. Newborn calves are around 1m in length and weigh 14kg.
- Distinguished by pale grey colouration, long slender beak and low triangular dorsal fin. Adults can acquire white-pink scars that increase with age and speckling on the dorsal fin.

Humpback Dolphin Societies

- Typically found in small populations (~100) within their range and in small groups of around 4-5 individuals.
- They are very social animals and live in complex fission-fusion societies where the composition of groups can change over time.
- Humpback dolphins live in sexually-segregated societies with males forming small strongly-bonded paired-alliances and females having larger networks of associates.
- Some individuals will display preferences for certain areas and have year-round residence.

Diet

- Humpback dolphins are carnivorous and feed on a variety of fish, squid and rays.

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.



Distribution & Habitat

- Humpback dolphins live close to the coast within the tropical waters of Australia and Papua New Guinea. They typically are found in small groups near estuaries, deep channels, rocky reefs, in sheltered bays, open ocean and occasionally in surf zones.



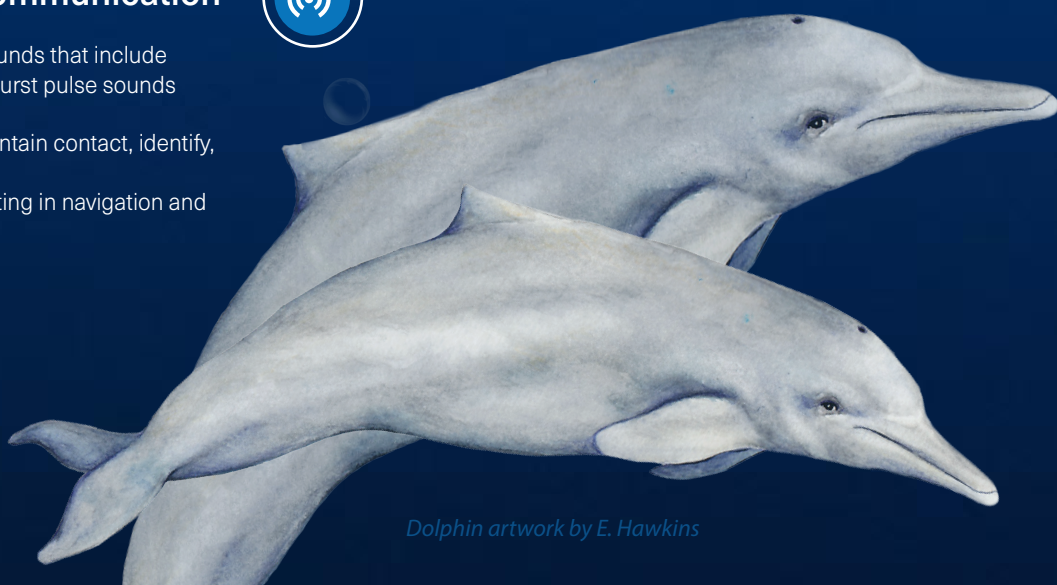
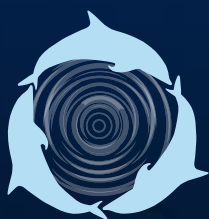
Reproduction & Breeding

- Gestation period of 10-12 months. Calves are highly dependent on their mothers for the first few years of life.
- It is thought that humpback dolphins reach maturity between 10-12yrs.
- Females give birth to a single calf approximately every 2-4 years.
- Humpback dolphins can live for over 40 years.



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. Many dolphin deaths in coastal waters have been attributed to ingestion of litter, boat strikes and pollutants such as insecticides.
- In other areas of the world, tuna fishing, gill netting and drift netting industries in addition to dolphin fisheries contribute to a large number of dolphin deaths each year.



Dolphin artwork by E. Hawkins

Protect the Marine Environment

Dolphin artwork by E. Hawkins



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



Use biodegradable products



Set a good example for others in your use and enjoyment of the marine environment.



Be a responsible swimmer and boater and abide by dolphin-watching regulations



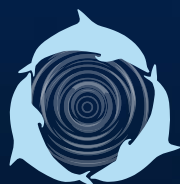
When fishing, take any discarded line, bait packaging etc. with you when you leave and abide by marine parks fishing rules.



Reduce-reuse-recycle your garbage



Do not feed dolphins



Dolphin Research Australia
Knowledge, Awareness, Action - Conserving Our Seas

www.dolphinresearchaustralia.org
info@dolphinresearchaustralia.org