



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*)

Description

Bottlenose dolphins are one of the most well known marine mammals. They are light gray in color with a robust body and short, thick rostrum. Inshore animals tend to be smaller and lighter, and offshore animals tend to be larger and darker. Bottlenose dolphins are commonly found in groups of 2-15 individuals, although offshore groups can number in the hundreds. They are sometimes associated with other small whales like pilot whales.

Habitat and Distribution

Bottlenose dolphins inhabit temperate and tropical waters worldwide. Coastal populations sometimes migrate into bays, estuaries, and river mouths. Offshore populations inhabit pelagic waters along the continental shelf.

Sounds

Bottlenose dolphins produce a wide variety of vocalizations including whistles, buzzes, quacks, pops, rusty hinge sounds, and yelps. Like other dolphins, they use high-frequency echolocation clicks to locate and capture prey.

Feeding

Bottlenose dolphins are generalists and feed on a variety of prey items, foraging both individually and cooperatively. Coastal populations feed on benthic invertebrates and fish, while offshore populations feed on pelagic fish and squid.

Threats

The primary threat to bottlenose dolphins is accidental injury and mortality from fishing gear (such as gillnet, seine, trawls and longline fisheries). Other threats include pollutants, biotoxins, and viral outbreaks. Bottlenose dolphins are still hunted in Japan and Taiwan.

Fun Fact

Bottlenose dolphins have a variety of foraging strategies, including 'fish whacking' where they strike a fish with their flukes to knock it out of the water!



Peter Duley / NEFSC



Allison Henry / NEFSC

Family:	Delphinidae
Population:	< 600,000
Status:	Least Concern
Length:	6 – 12 feet
Weight:	300 – 1400 lbs