

# Common Bottlenose Dolphin



## Description

Common bottlenose dolphins are small whales and belong to the group known as 'toothed whales'. They have a prominent dorsal fin and are dark grey in colour with a whitish coloured belly. Common bottlenose dolphins can live to over 30 years of age and are powerful swimmers with the ability to reach speeds of up to 40 kilometres an hour. They are an air breathing mammal and so must come to the surface of the water to breathe through the blowhole on top of their head. Because they are a conscious air breathing mammal they can't just fall asleep in the water, otherwise they risk drowning. So, they lay on top of the water with their blowhole exposed and rest one half of their brain whilst the other half stays alert and reminds them to keep breathing and swimming.



## Scientific name

*Tursiops Truncatus*

## Diet & Habitat

Common bottlenose dolphins are found in warm coastal regions, tropical oceans and other warm waters around the world. The Peel region has a large number of this amazing creature that reside in and frequently visit the waterways. They do so due to the abundance of fish which is their choice of food and the shallow, warmer, calm, protected waters which is great for birthing.

Pods of dolphins work together to trap schools of fish by rounding them up, they then attack from all sides to feed. Their diet consists mainly of fish, however those males living alone need to often be opportunistic feeders and so spend most of their time looking for easier meals like octopus and crustaceans. Dolphins don't use their teeth to eat their food. They do have teeth, however that allows them to grasp food. When feeding they swallow their food whole and head first!

## Threats

While dolphins have few natural enemies, some sharks and larger whale species (like the Orca) will occasionally prey on them. This is especially true for calves. Humans also pose a threat to dolphins by destruction and pollution to their marine environment, over fishing and hunting of dolphins in other countries and getting entangled in tuna nets and other fishing equipment.



## Social Life

Dolphins are one of few mammal groups outside of humans which display willfully social behavior. They live together in pods which aside from the social benefits the dolphin receives, it may also receive protection. They have many partners over their lifetime. Females generally have a calf every 2 to 3 years, only one each time. The gestation period is 12 months and the calves stay by their mother's side and suckle their mother's milk for up to 18 months.

The females generally stay together for their entire life while the males venture off after about 6 years of age from their birth pods and live alone or join other pods for a short period of time.

Common bottlenose dolphins are highly active and have a very cheeky nature. They can frequently be seen tail slapping, riding on waves created by boats, surfing waves and leaping playfully into the air. They also chase each other and enjoy throwing around objects such as seaweed and fish in a playful manner.

Dolphins are very curious creatures and quite often approach humans to say hello. They are often very quick to approach Mandurah Cruises boats to surf their wake, show off and greet the passengers on board. Mandurah Cruises can identify many of the dolphins that reside and frequently visit Mandurah's waterways by their dorsal fin and other markings on their body.

## Communication

They communicate through burst pulsed sounds, whistles and body language. Dolphins produce high frequency clicks which act as a sonar system called echolocation. When the clicking sound hits an object in the water, like a fish or rock, they bounce off and come back to the dolphin as echoes. Echolocation tells the dolphins the shape, size, speed, distance and location of the object.

### Did you know?

Dolphins call each other by name. They name themselves with a signature whistle. Other dolphins produce copies of this whistle when they are separated from this specific individual so they can reunite. These whistles can be detected from up to 20 kilometres away depending on water depth and whistle frequency!



## Dolphin Blog

Mandurah Cruises have a Dolphin Blog which is where sightings and encounters had on Mandurah Cruises' cruises with Mandurah's amazing wild dolphins as well as photos, videos and information are shared. You are welcome to follow this blog at [www.mandurahcruises.com.au/dolphin-blog/](http://www.mandurahcruises.com.au/dolphin-blog/) and share your own sightings, photos and videos on Mandurah Cruises Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/mandurahcruises](http://www.facebook.com/mandurahcruises)

