

## VOCABULARY

**ECHOLOCATION:** the location of objects reflected by sound

**FLUKES:** tail fins, which enable swimming

**POD:** a group of dolphins that travel together

**VIBRISSAE:** stiff hairs dolphins are born with

# BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN

*(Tursiops truncatus)*

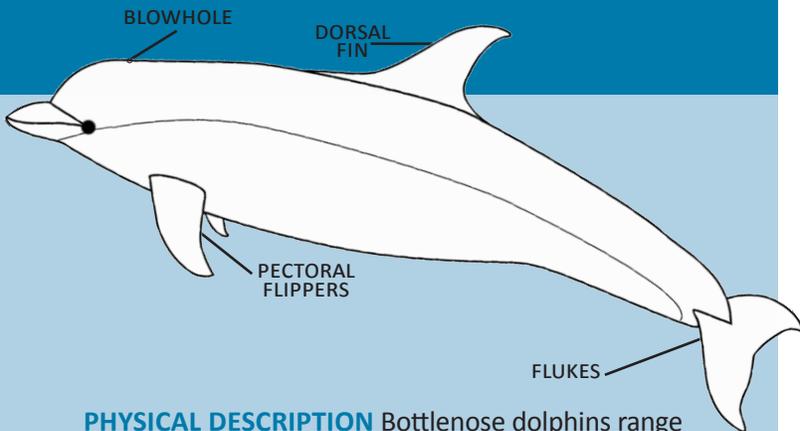
**CLASS:** Mammalia

**ORDER:** Cetacea

**FAMILY:** Delphinidae

**GENIUS:** *Tursiops*

**SPECIES:** *truncatus*



**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION** Bottlenose dolphins range in color from light gray to near-black with lighter coloration on their bellies. Adults range from 6-12.5 feet long and weigh up to 1,400 pounds. They can swim up to 22 miles per hour using their **flukes**. Prominent dorsal fins help researchers identify individuals. Distinct inshore and offshore populations exist—those inshore tend to be smaller and lighter.

**DIET** They use **echolocation** to find and capture their prey, which typically includes fish, invertebrates and squid. Dolphins are social animals and often forage cooperatively.

**LIFE HISTORY** Males generally live 40-45 years, while females can surpass 50. Their only natural predators are orcas and sharks. Females give birth every 3-6 years after 12 months of gestation. Calves feed on their mothers' milk for 3-5 years and can start eating small fish when they are about six months old.

**GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION** Bottlenose dolphins are found in most warm and temperate oceans worldwide. They travel in **pods** of 2-15 animals, typically appearing in Maryland waters April-November.

**LOCAL INFORMATION** These dolphins are among the most commonly stranded marine mammals locally. They are often seen at Assateague Island and Ocean City and commonly hunt in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

**STATUS** Protection under the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 identifies humans as their greatest threat and prevents any resulting future depletion. It is illegal to approach or harass wild dolphins, though they are curious creatures that will approach boats and humans, often resulting in fatal injuries.



Bottlenose dolphins are highly active and can be seen leaping and playing with other members of their pod.



They have 20-28 conical teeth on each side of their jaws.



Proof that all mammals have hair, calves are born with whisker-like **vibrissae** on their snout that fall off shortly after birth.

**TO REPORT A STRANDED MARINE MAMMAL OR SEA TURTLE, CALL THE 24-HOUR HOTLINE AT 800-628-9944**



Larry Hogan, Governor ● Mark Belton, Secretary

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