



DOLPHINS

- 36** species of dolphin
- 9** species found around New Zealand
- 2** species found only in our waters



Around the world dolphins live in nearly all aquatic environments, including oceans, coastal, estuarine and freshwater - and in temperatures ranging from less than 0°C to more than 30°C.

Endemic

Māui (North Island),
Hector's (South Island)

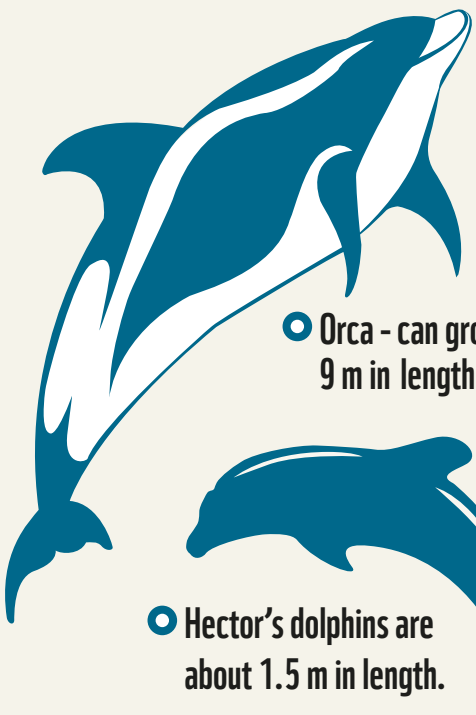
Coastal populations

Short-beaked Common,
Bottlenose and Dusky
dolphin

Actually dolphins

Orca, Pilot Whale

WE HAVE BOTH THE BIGGEST AND SMALLEST DOLPHIN



Orca - can grow up to
9 m in length

Hector's dolphins are
about 1.5 m in length.

POD-LIFE

Dolphins are social animals who swim together in groups known as pods. Most pods range from two to 30 individuals, but it depends on the species.



Common dolphins may form enormous schools of several thousand individuals. They are also known to associate with schools of pilot whales and other dolphin species such as dusky dolphins.

Living in pods not only protects dolphins from predators, but it also provides an opportunity for socialisation, play and hunting in numbers.

Pod-life is made easier by the dolphins' wide vocabulary. They are a chatty lot. Making a variety of sounds including whistles, clicks, squawks, squeaks, moans, barks, groans, and yelps. The clicks are used to sense their surroundings through echolocation, while they use whistles to communicate with each other.

STRANDING

While the phenomenon is often associated with whales, dolphins strand too. In fact, in New Zealand most mass strandings are by pilot whales (who are actually dolphins).

Why it happens is not well understood. However, because there are stranding 'hotspots' like Farewell Spit, and most mass strandings happen in summer when they follow food inshore. Problems with echolocation in shallower waters is likely to be a factor.



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THREATS

Around New Zealand, many dolphin populations are under pressure. The endemic Māui is nationally critical, while the Hector's dolphin is nationally vulnerable. Local populations of bottlenose dolphins in Bay of Islands and other areas are declining.



Boats and tourism

Growing interest in marine mammal tourism is having an impact on dolphins. The presence of large numbers of boats and people involved in marine mammal tourism can leave them dolphins with insufficient time to rest, and feed and can result in the separation of mothers and their calves. Boat strike is also a risk.



Noise

Noise pollution from shipping, the oil and gas industry, seismic surveys and underwater construction can stress and injure dolphins. It can also interfere with their ability to communicate, reproduce, navigate, and find prey.



Toxoplasmosis

Toxoplasmosis is a parasitic disease which reproduces in cats and is a significant threat to Hector's and Māui dolphins. It has been confirmed as a cause of death in Hector's and Māui dolphins and can also cause behavioural changes, still-births and reduced reproductive rates.

BY ADOPTING A DOLPHIN YOU ARE HELPING PROTECT THESE ICONIC ANIMALS AND THEIR OCEAN HOME. THANK YOU

MORE READING

Department of Conservation (www.doc.govt.nz)