

# COMMON BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN

## *Tursiops Truncatus*

### Key identification features

This large, robust dolphin is one of the most familiar of all cetaceans, largely due to its playful acrobatic nature, popularity with the media, widespread use in aquaria and global distribution in coastal waters. Distinguished by its uniform grey colouration extending as far as the white belly, and the short, 'bottle-shaped' beak.

### Behaviour

Common Bottlenose Dolphins are very active and curious animals and are capable of travelling at great speed. They regularly ride in the bow-wave and wake of passing vessels and often perform amazing acrobatics. Feeding occurs during the day and at night, hunting a variety of fish, squid and invertebrates so diverse that it would almost be easier to describe the prey that Common Bottlenose Dolphins don't eat rather than the prey that they do! Most commonly seen in pods of around 10 individuals, group sizes range between one and 40.

### Distribution and habitat

A cosmopolitan species that occurs worldwide in temperate and tropical seas. Two distinct 'types' of Common Bottlenose Dolphin are generally recognised, although it is not possible to tell them apart at sea. The 'nearshore type' can be found in bays, lagoons and estuaries, whereas the 'offshore type' ranges widely away from the coast in shelf waters and deeper waters beyond the continental shelf. Common Bottlenose Dolphins are locally common in

inshore waters throughout Europe as far north as Scotland.

In Great Britain this species is largely restricted to five regions where semi-resident populations persist. The most famous and well-studied groups of dolphins have home ranges centred in the Moray Firth, Scotland, and Cardigan Bay, Wales. Since 1991, Common Bottlenose Dolphins have also returned to South West England, with over 50 individuals known to roam throughout Cornwall, Devon and Dorset. Research suggests that these animals may form a roaming part of the Cardigan Bay population. Other discrete populations exist around the Western Isles of Scotland and around the Channel Islands.

### Viewing hotspots

The population in the Moray Firth, which is the most northerly resident population in the world, is estimated at 130 animals, whilst around 200 animals frequent Cardigan Bay. These are amongst the most accessible places in Europe for dolphin watching, with numerous excellent coastal viewpoints as well as a selection of boat operators.



