

SEE. REPORT. SAVE.

**Hi! This is a species
identification booklet.
You can actively
help the research
by reporting what
you encounter at sea!**

Ada Natoli, Ph.D.





Wild dolphins naturally occur along the UAE coastline and they are frequently sighted close to the shore even in the busy waters of Dubai and Abu Dhabi. To date, we collected over 300 sightings, thanks to the public reports, and most of those were sighted within 5 miles from the shore.

Why a UAE dolphin project?

The UAE Dolphin Project is a non-profit initiative dedicated to investigate the dolphin population along the UAE coastline, to provide scientific information and raise public awareness to support their conservation. In 2014 we conducted the first one-year long survey dedicated to these species along the Dubai coastline to assess which species occur, their frequency and whether they are transient or resident populations.

Why is it important to report a sighting?

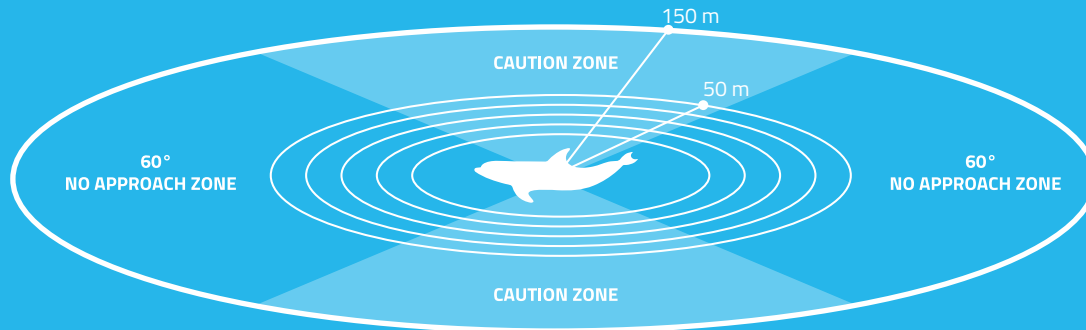
You can help to gather information about the local dolphin populations and support their conservation! Every single sighting reported is extremely useful to the researchers and helps to understand the dolphins' occurrence and movements of individuals. We now have 120 dolphins identified by their dorsal fins in our catalogue. Always report your sightings and if possible take a picture or a video and you can help us to track them!

Why are dolphins important?

Dolphins are not only iconic animals, they are predators that occupy the top of the marine food chain and are considered "Ecological Indicators". Dolphins are the first marine species that suffer if pollution, overfishing or habitat degradation starts compromising the marine environment. So, by monitoring a dolphin population we can immediately understand if something is affecting the local marine environment, and take action before it is too late! After all, dolphins and humans eat the same fish!

Please be DOLPHIN SMART and demonstrate your support for dolphin conservation!

- *S** stay back 50 metres from dolphins (100m from whales).
- *M** move away cautiously if dolphins/whales show signs of disturbance (sudden change in behavior).
- *A** always put your engine in neutral when dolphins/whales are near.
- *R** refrain from feeding, touching, or swimming with wild dolphins.
- *T** teach others to be DOLPHIN SMART.



Long-term disturbance on a dolphin population has been proven to have detrimental effect on dolphin's wellbeing: it increases mortality rate and decreases birth rate.



How to be DOLPHIN SMART

- The caution zone for vessels (motorized and not motorized) is the area within 150m of a dolphin (300m of a whale). Maximum 3 vessels within the caution zone at any one time, and vessels should move cautiously at no wake speeds within this zone.
- Approach whales and dolphins from parallel to and slightly to the rear – not from directly behind or head-on. When leaving whales or dolphins, move off at a slow (no wake) speed to the outer limit of the caution zone from the closest animal before gradually increasing speed.
- Avoid disturbance to mothers and their calves. Mother and calf will be close together and the calves are sometimes difficult to see. If any sudden change in behavior occurs, move away immediately at a slow steady pace.
- Whales and dolphins may approach your vessel. If this happens, place the engine in neutral and let the animal(s) come to you, slow down and continue on course, or steer a straight course away from them.
- Personal motorized water crafts (jet ski, parasail, hovercraft, underwater scooter) must stay at 300m from the animals at all time as they can cause injuries to the animals.

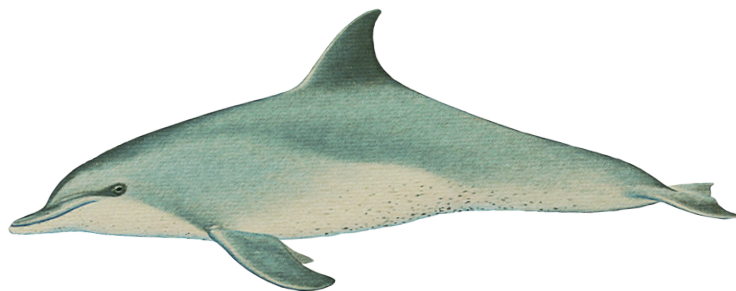
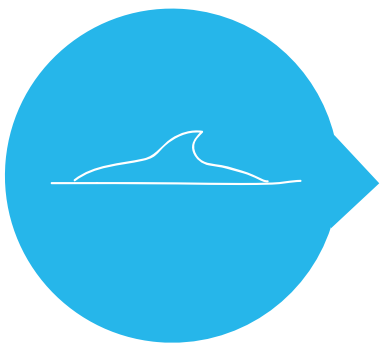


Swimming with wild dolphins?

No, thanks! As much as wild dolphins seem friendly, they can be dangerous. They are not trained to interact with people like those in dolphinariums. Think! A dolphin is on average a 250kg animal, is a carnivore and has LOTS of teeth!!

This is Liv, one of the 92 bottlenose dolphins identified in Dubai waters, clearly recognizable by two big notches at the base of its fin. Liv was first sighted in October 2013, and then again in May and June 2014, each time in company of three other dolphins: Selfie, Ta016 and Ta019.





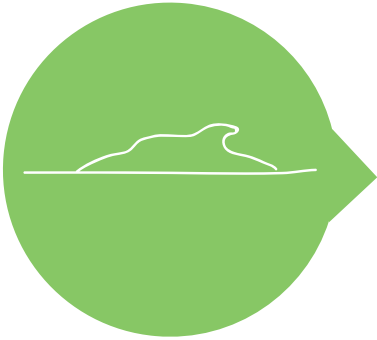
Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin

Grey color with falcate fin, sometimes spotted belly is visible. Robust body with a medium length beak. Approximate max length is 2.6m. Worldwide, it has a discontinuous distribution in the warm temperate to tropical Indo-Pacific waters. Possibly a bigger species can be sighted offshore (common bottlenose dolphin).

- *Dolphins and whales belong to the order Cetacea. They are mammals, which means they need to breathe air. If entangled in nets underwater they drown like us.*
- *Individual dolphins can be identified by their fin profile that in adults vary as they accumulate permanent notches.*
- *It is not true that if you whistle or clap your hands dolphins will come closer. Generally, dolphins approach the boats to surf the wave or because they are curious.*
- *Dolphins sleep resting half brain at the time. Resting dolphins generally are in tight groups swimming slowly not in a clear direction.*
- *On average an adult dolphin will eat 4-9% of its body weight in fish, so a 250 kg dolphin will eat 10-22.5 kg of fish per day.*

Flipper is easily recognizable by two clear notches at the base of and just behind the fin. It is among the 24 humpback dolphins individuals identified in Dubai waters. Flipper was sighted in November and December 2013 and then again in April and May 2014.





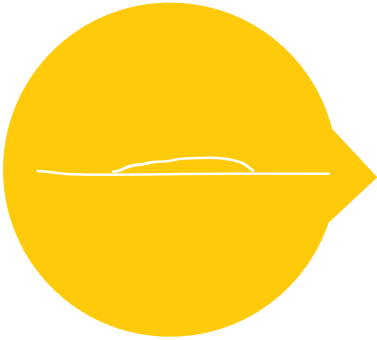
Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphin

Gray color with long slender beak, but clearly recognizable by the characteristic hump in front of the dorsal fin. The top of the fin may show white pigmentation in some individuals. Approximate max length 2.7 m. It is found in shallow, coastal waters less than 100m deep.

- *Being mammals, dolphins and whales give birth to a live young, called a calf. They are born tail first and suckle from their mother for up to 4 years. Mother dolphins produce milk extremely rich in fat, often up to 50%.*
- *Dolphins are highly intelligent and they can work out specific techniques to use simple tools (like sponges or shells) to hunt and explore their environment. These techniques are generally passed from mother to calf.*
- *Dolphins echolocate, that means using high frequency sound to scan their surroundings and locate their prey.*
- *Recent research proved that wild bottlenose dolphins in a group call each other with specific names, and that they also have names for objects like sea grass.*

With no dorsal fin, small size and elusive behavior, this species is among the most difficult ones to study in the wild because is virtually impossible to identify specific individuals and to obtain good population estimates.





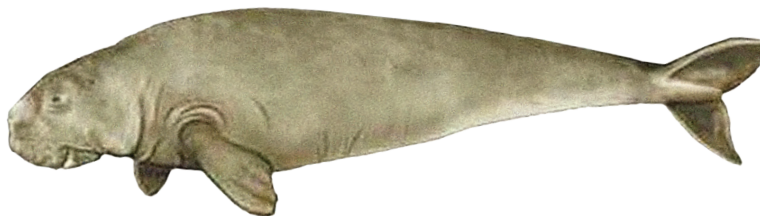
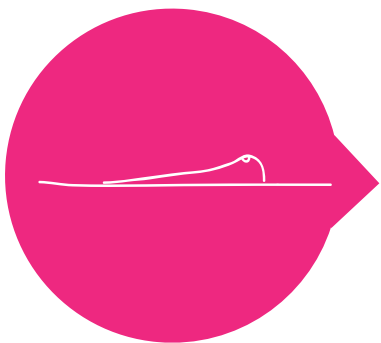
Indo-Pacific Finless Porpoise

Dark grey-black color with no dorsal fin. Total length is approximately 2m maximum. It generally occurs in shallow (usually <50 m deep) coastal marine waters, as well as some river mouths and estuaries. Very elusive behaviour.

- *Porpoises are not exactly dolphins. Their body is smaller and rounder reaching maximum a length of 2.5m, their head is round and beak-less. There are only 6 different species of porpoises recognised worldwide.*
- *Because they mainly inhabit coastal shallow waters, porpoises are generally strongly affected by human activity. The greatest threat to their populations is by-catch in fishing nets and pollution.*
- *The Vaquita is the smallest porpoise and marine mammal. It only lives in a restricted area north of Baha California. It is critically endangered with only 92 individuals left in the world.*

There are other interesting species you may encounter in UAE waters. They all breathe air, but they are totally dependent on the marine environment.





Dugong

Brownish to dark gray with no dorsal fin, can be mistaken for the finless porpoise. However, the nostris, located at tip of the muzzle comes up first when surfaces, unlike in finless porpoises that surface with their back. Approximate max length 3.3 m and can weigh up to 500kg.

- *Dugongs are marine mammals but not dolphins! They belong to a different order called Sirenia.*
- *Dugongs are also called "sea cows" as they are vegetarian and eat only seagrass. An adult can eat up to 40 kg of seagrass a day.*
- *Baby dugongs stay with their mothers for at least 18 months and are often seen riding on their mothers' back.*
- *UAE hosts the second largest population of dugongs in the world.*
- *Dugongs are unable to hold their breath for more than about 12 minutes and therefore they easily drown once entangled in nets.*



Socotra cormorants are endemic to the Arabian peninsula with nesting colonies only reported in the Gulf and in the South Oman.

1



Great cormorants are widely distributed world-wide. They nest in all continents, but in North America only on the Atlantic coast, with few colonies left.

2



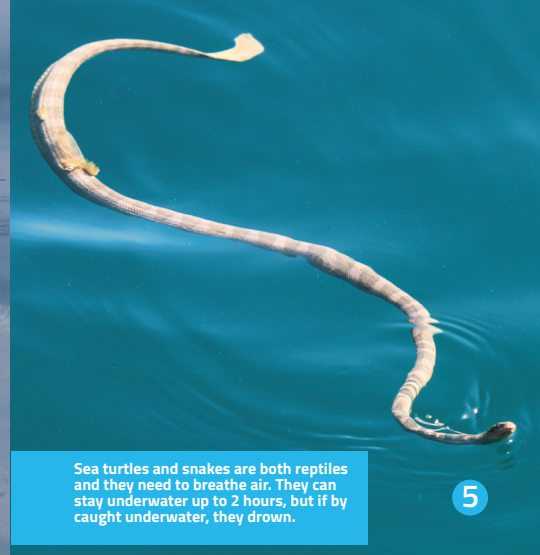
Green turtles are herbivores while hawksbill turtles are omnivores feeding mainly on corals and sponges.

3



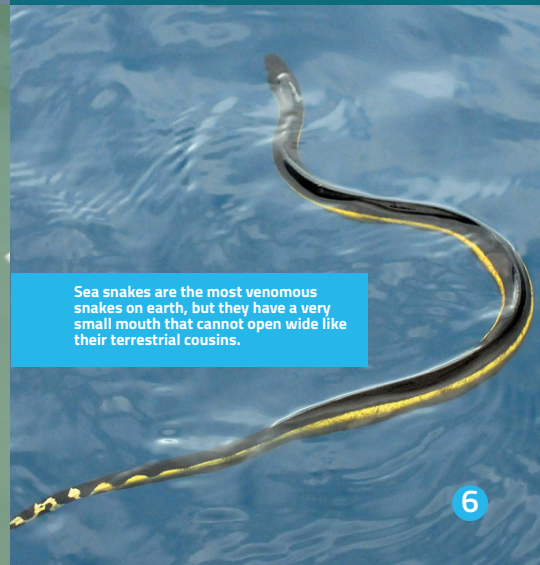
Female sea turtles come back to nest on their native beach when they reach maturity at around 30 years old.

4



Sea turtles and snakes are both reptiles and they need to breathe air. They can stay underwater up to 2 hours, but if by caught underwater, they drown.

5



Sea snakes are the most venomous snakes on earth, but they have a very small mouth that cannot open wide like their terrestrial cousins.

6

Cormorants

1 Socotra Cormorant

Green eyes, a long black beak and glossy black plumage, if observed close enough the feathers on the back are a bronze-green/blue colour. Juveniles have light brown feathers with white chests and necks. Approximate height 80cm.

2 Great Cormorant

Green eyes, long light beak with yellow and white bands under the eye. Plumage is black with bronze-green/blue backs. Distinctively; breeding individuals have a white patch on their thighs, a crest of short black hairs on the back of their heads and white necks. Juveniles look the same as Socotra cormorants but have more yellow around the beak and under the eye. Approximate height 90cm.

Sea Snakes

5 Arabian Gulf Sea Snake

Pale yellow in color with 33-45 dark bands from the head to the tail and an olive coloured head. Maximum length can reach over 1 meter. Mostly found in shallow and sandy bottom waters.

6 Yellow-bellied Sea Snake

Black or dark brown on top, yellow from the bottom and a black on yellow pattern on the tail. Approximate maximum length is 110cm. It is mainly a pelagic species.

Turtles

3 Green turtle

Large sea turtle with a smooth brown or olive shell. The head is large and round. Approximate maximum length is 1.5m and an adult individual can weigh up to 320Kg.

4 Hawksbill turtle

Distinguishable by the elongated mouth that resembles a beak, two pairs of prefrontal scales on the head and its colorful shell, with jagged edge and overlapping thick bony scutes. The hawksbill turtle is smaller than the green turtle, with an approximate maximum length of 1.14m and weight of up to 68kg.

Doing very little you can really make the difference in protecting the local marine environment and supporting research on the local dolphin population.

How to Report a Sighting?



Fill the form in the next page and return it to your club.



Go to our website www.uaedolphinproject.org and use our interactive form to Report a Sighting.



Send a text or a Whatsapp to **+971 (0) 566717164** including the date, time, location of the sighting, species, approx. number of individuals and if photo or video was taken. (e.g.: 03042011 12:30 1mile NW front Burj Al Arab (or GPS coordinates))



Email to sighting@uaedolphinproject.org reporting the data as above or post your sighting data on the project Facebook or Twitter page.



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uaedolphinproject.org



youtube.com/user/UAEdolphinproject

Dolphin sighting form

Name / email address / mobile number

Location & Time

Date / Time (eg: 11/12/2015 - 15:30 PM)

Animals seen from

Boat ☐ Kayak ☐ Land ☐ Air ☐

Latitude:

N

Longitude:

E

Sea state (please single check)



Location (State your country and your position using landmarks, eg: UAE, Dubai, 1 mile from shore between the Burj Al Arab and the world islands):

Sighting details

Species



Bottlenose

Humpback

Finless

Dugong

Species confidence

Certain ☐ Probable ☐ Not sure ☐

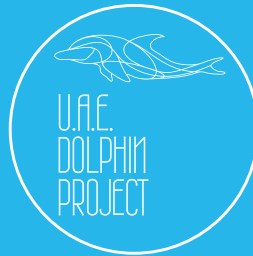
Photo / Videos

Yes ☐ No ☐

Approximate number of animals

Presence of calves

Behaviour (eg: leaping, feeding, bowriding
direction, distance from boat)



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Credits:

Himansu Das, Environment Agency Abu Dhabi for the dugong picture and Donna Kwan, CMS, for the facts on dugongs. Sabir Muzzafar and Roxanne Whelan, UAEU, for the Socotra cormorant picture and contribution about cormorants. Dina Abedini, DIA, for her contribution about turtles and sea snakes. Ionian Dolphin Project, Tethys Research Institute, for the "Be Dolphin Smart" code of conduct.

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