



# Ask about Ireland



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## Bottlenose Dolphin



**Latin:** *Halichoerus grypus*

**Irish:** *Deilf bolgshrónach*

**Size:** Bottlenose dolphins can grow up to 3.5m in length.

**Months seen:** All year, but more frequently in the summertime.

**Habitat:** They live in the open sea, and sometimes coastal waters, estuaries and bays. The only known resident, or regular dolphin group in Ireland is in the Shannon Estuary.

**Food:** The diet of a bottlenose dolphin consists mainly of small fish such as salmon, cod, and herring. They will often work in a group to keep the shoal of fish together so they can maximise the catch. This is called a 'herding'.

**Features:** The bottlenose dolphin is one of the most common species of dolphin in Ireland. It is one of 24 species of cetaceans (whales, dolphins, and porpoise) recorded in Irish waters. Fungi, the Dingle dolphin, and those found in the Shannon Estuary are all bottlenose dolphins. They are easy to recognise by their uniform grey colour and short, stubby nose.

Female bottlenose dolphins do not begin to breed until they are 10-12 years old. The newborn calf is entirely dependant on the mother for the first year of life, while males have no role in rearing the calf.

As sound travels much better underwater than light, dolphins can hear a lot more than they can see. They make a lot of different sounds, such as clicks, whistles and groans. Each dolphin will develop its own distinctive whistle soon after birth so that the mother and calf can find each other in the ocean.

Bottlenose dolphins have a very playful nature. They will often swim up to boats, follow them into the harbour or leap over the surface of the water for fun.