

## Taking a dip with dolphins

April 2005

Most people like dolphins.

These animals belong to the group called cetaceans, which comprises toothed whales.

There are several species in Australia, but the most common is the Bottlenose Dolphin, the most widely distributed marine mammal in the world. Bottlenose Dolphins are between two and four metres long, with a dark grey back, a cream to white under-belly, and a short rounded snout.

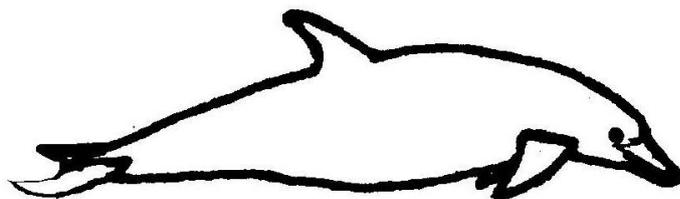
Dolphins frequent bays and inlets around the Australian shores. They are very social animals and feed together in groups of up to 15 individuals.

They emit grunts, squeals, clicks and whistles to communicate with one another, and find prey using eco-location. Their main predators are large sharks; however other threats to their well-being are degradation of habitat and pollution.

Dolphins can be observed at close quarters by taking a trip with an eco-tourism organisation operating in Port Philip Bay from October to April. It is quite an adventure to see an animal in its own habitat.

Recently a couple of members of the Hamilton Field Naturalists' Club had an exciting experience swimming with these animals. They were thrilled to slip into the water, wearing a wetsuit and with a mask and snorkel, via a platform at water level attached to the back of the boat. They then hung onto the platform and looked down into the clear water to see the dolphins swimming beside and underneath them with effortless ease and power.

Dolphins seem to enjoy riding the bow waves of ships and boats. It was a delight to watch their sleek bodies riding this wave within inches of the hull. Our members were fortunate to see eight dolphins, which of course are wild creatures; and may or may not appear. You take your chance!



Some of this article was based on information from the following web sites:

[www.kidcyber.com.au/topics/dolphin.htm](http://www.kidcyber.com.au/topics/dolphin.htm)

[www.amonline.net.au/factsheets/bottlenose-dolphin.htm](http://www.amonline.net.au/factsheets/bottlenose-dolphin.htm).