

RISSO'S DOLPHINS



- Risso's dolphin is named after Antoine Risso, whose description formed the basis of the first public description of the animal, by Georges Cuvier, in 1812. Another common name for the Risso's dolphin is **grampus** (also the species' genus), although this common name was more often used for the orca. The etymology of the word "grampus" is unclear. It may be an agglomeration of the Latin *grandis piscis* or French *grand poisson*, both meaning big fish. The specific epithet *griseus* refers to the mottled (almost scarred) grey colour of its body.

Interesting Facts:

- Risso's dolphin has a relatively large anterior body and dorsal fin, while the posterior tapers to a relatively narrow tail. The bulbous head has a vertical crease in front.
- Infants are dorsally grey to brown and ventrally cream-colored, with a white anchor-shaped area between the pectorals and around the mouth.
- In older calves, the nonwhite areas darken to nearly black, and then lighten (except for the always dark dorsal fin). Linear scars mostly from social interaction eventually cover the bulk of the body. Older individuals appear mostly white. Most individuals have two to seven pairs of teeth, all in the lower jaw.
- Length is typically 10 feet (3.0 m), although specimens may reach 14.1 feet (4.3 m). Like most dolphins, males are typically slightly larger than females.
- This species weighs 300–500 kilograms (660–1,100 lb), making it the largest species called "dolphin".
- They are found worldwide in temperate and tropical waters, usually in deep waters rather, but close to land. As well as the tropical parts of the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, they are also found in the Persian Gulf and Mediterranean and Red Seas, but not the Black Sea.
- Their preferred environment is just off the continental shelf on steep banks, with water depths varying from 400–1,000 m (1,300–3,300 ft) and water temperatures at least 10°C (50°F) and preferably 15–20°C (59–68°F).
- The population around the continental shelf of the United States is estimated in excess of 60,000. In the Pacific, a census recorded 175,000 individuals in eastern tropical waters and 85,000 in the west.
- These dolphins typically travel in groups of 10–51, but that may reach 400. Smaller, stable subgroups exist within larger groups. They also travel with other cetaceans. They harass and surf the bow waves of gray whales, as well as ocean swells.
- Gestation requires an estimated 13–14 months, at intervals of 2.4 years. Calving reaches seasonal peaks in the winter in the eastern Pacific and in the summer and fall in the western Pacific. Females mature sexually at ages 8–10, and males at age 10–12. The oldest specimen reached 34.5 years.
- Risso's dolphins generally do not approach boats, but occasionally surf bow waves.
- The Risso's dolphin populations of the North, Baltic, and Mediterranean Seas are listed on Appendix II^[8] of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), since they have an unfavorable conservation status or would benefit significantly from international co-operation organized by tailored agreements.