

SPINNER DOLPHINS



The **spinner dolphin** (*Stenella longirostris*) is a small dolphin found in off-shore tropical waters around the world. It is famous for its acrobatic displays in which it spins along its longitudinal axis as it leaps through the air. It is a member of the family Delphinidae of toothed whales. The spinner dolphin is sometimes referred to as the **long-snouted dolphin**, particularly in older texts, to distinguish it from the similar Clymene dolphin, which is often called the short-snouted spinner dolphin. The species was described by John Edward Gray|John Gray in 1828. The four named subspecies are:

- **Eastern spinner dolphin** (*S. l. orientalis*), from the tropical eastern Pacific.
- **Central American or Costa Rican spinner dolphin** (*S. l. centroamericana*), also found in the tropical eastern Pacific.
- **Gray's or Hawaiian spinner dolphin** (*S. l. longirostris*), from the central Pacific Ocean around Hawaii but represents a mixture of broadly similar subtypes found worldwide.
- **Dwarf spinner dolphin** (*S. l. roseiventris*), first found in the Gulf of Thailand.

A hybrid form characterized by its white belly inhabits the eastern Pacific. Other less distinct groupings inhabit other oceans.

Interesting Facts:

- The spinner dolphin is a small cetacean with a slim build. Adults are typically 129–235 cm long and reach a body mass of 23–79 kg.
- This species has an elongated rostrum and a triangular or sub triangular dorsal fin.
- Spinner dolphins generally have tripartite color patterns. The dorsal area is dark gray, the sides light gray and the underside pale gray or white.
- Also, a dark band runs from the eye to the flipper, bordered above by a thin, light line. However, the spinner dolphin has more geographic variation in form and coloration than other cetaceans. In the open waters of eastern Pacific, dolphins have relatively small skulls with short rostra.
- The spinner dolphin lives in nearly all tropical and subtropical waters between 40°N and 40°S.
- The species primarily inhabits coastal waters, islands, or banks. However, in the eastern tropical Pacific, dolphins live far from shore.
- The spinner dolphin feeds mainly on small mesopelagic fish, squids, and sergestid shrimps, and will dive 200-300 m to feed on them.
- Spinner dolphins are in turn preyed on by sharks. Other possible predators include the killer whale, the false killer whale, the pygmy killer whale and the short-finned pilot whale.
- The spinner dolphin has a 10-month gestation period, and mothers nurse their young for one to two years. Females are sexually mature at four to seven years, with three-year calving intervals, while males are sexually mature at seven to 10 years.
- A spinner dolphin comes out of the water front first and twists its body as it rises into the air. When it reaches its maximum height, the dolphin descends back into the water, landing on its side. A dolphin can make two to 5.5 spins in one leap; the swimming and rotational speed of the dolphin as it spins underwater affects the number of spins it can do while airborne. These spins may serve several functions. Dolphins may also make nose-outs, tail slaps, flips, head slaps, "salmon leaps", and side and back slaps.