

# STRIPED DOLPHINS



The striped dolphin is one of five species traditionally included in the genus *Stenella*; however, recent genetic work by LeDuc *et al.* (1999) indicates *Stenella*, as traditionally conceived, is not a natural group. According to that study, the closest relatives of the striped dolphin are the Clymene dolphin, the common dolphins, the Atlantic spotted dolphin, and "*Tursiops*" *aduncus*, which was formerly considered a subspecies of the bottlenose dolphin. The striped dolphin was described by Franz Meyen in 1833. The specific name *coeruleoalba* (from Latin *caeruleus* 'dark blue' and *albus* 'white') refers to the characteristic blue and white stripes on the flanks.

## Interesting Facts:

- The striped dolphin has a similar size and shape to several other dolphins that inhabit the waters it does (see pantropical spotted dolphin, Atlantic spotted dolphin, Clymene dolphin).
- However, its coloring is very different and makes it relatively easy to notice at sea. The underside is blue, white, or pink.
- One or two black bands circle the eyes, and then run across the back, to the flipper. These bands widen to the width of the flipper which are the same size.
- Two further black stripes run from behind the ear — one is short and ends just above the flipper. The other is longer and thickens along the flanks until it curves down under the belly just prior to the tail stock.
- Above these stripes, the dolphin's flanks are colored light blue or grey. All appendages are black, as well.
- At birth, individuals weigh about 10 kg (22 lb) and are up to a meter (3 feet) long. By adulthood, they have grown to 2.4 m (8 ft) (females) or 2.6 m (8.5 ft) (males) and weigh 150 kg (330 lb) (female) or 160 kg (352 lb) (male).
- Research suggested sexual maturity was reached at 12 years in Mediterranean females and in the Pacific at between seven and 9 years.
- Longevity is about 55–60 years.
- Gestation lasts about 12 months, with a three- or four-year gap between calving.
- In common with other dolphins in its genus, the striped dolphin moves in large groups — usually up to thousands of individuals in number.
- The striped dolphin is as capable as any dolphin at performing acrobatics — frequently breaching and jumping far above the surface of the water.
- The adult striped dolphin eats fish, squid, octopus, krill, and other crustaceans. Mediterranean striped dolphins seem to prey primarily on cephalopods (50-100% of stomach contents), while northeastern Atlantic striped dolphins most often prey on fish, frequently cod.
- They mainly feed on cephalopods, crustaceans, and bony fishes. They feed anywhere within the water column where prey is concentrated, and they can dive to depths of 700 m to hunt deeper-dwelling species.
- The eastern tropical Pacific and Mediterranean populations of the striped dolphin are listed on Appendix II 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.