



Dear Dolphin Friend,

We are using the year as an opportunity to present to you one species of dolphin each month in more detail. The dolphin of the month for June is the bottlenosed dolphin – a familiar friend to all dolphin fans!



Bottlenosed dolphin

It is probably the best-known species of dolphin across the world, loved for its expressive and happy appearance. It has made a name for itself as a friend of humans because every now and again there are incidents reported of one or more bottle-nosed dolphins protecting ship-wrecked sailors from sharks or saving people from drowning. Young and old are thrilled to watch as its silver grey body rips through the blue water like an arrow, as it rides the waves or executes acrobatic leaps into the air. Countless photographers are also fascinated by this species and there is a great multitude of pictures as a result.

Down to the facts

Bottle-nosed dolphins can be seen in all the world's seas except the polar regions. Their northern extreme of their range are the waters of the Moray Firth in the north-east of Scotland. It is in these cold northern waters that the largest specimens occur: they can reach as long as 4 metres. By contrast, bottle-nosed dolphins in the appreciably warmer waters of the Adriatic reach a maximum of just three metres. Many coastal populations like those in the Moray Firth and off the Croatian islands of Cres and Lošinj are present the whole year, meaning that they have their home in one particular area and do not migrate seasonally.

Experts from our partner organisation, WDCS, dedicated to the protection of these popular dolphins

Bottle-nosed dolphins face many dangers worldwide. The expert, Charlie Phillips is engaged in protecting animals in the Moray Firth and every day sees the many, man-made threats.

“The large and wonderful bottle-nosed dolphins of the Moray Firth which live in the cold Scottish waters, need a constant supply of food rich in fat, like herring, mackerel or their favourite summer delicacy – Atlantic salmon. Our misuse of marine resources has led to food supplies being reduced to the extent that the animals known as the Moray Firth dolphins are now called the North-east Scottish dolphins, because they have to swim beyond their usual hunting grounds to meet their feeding needs. I consider myself highly privileged to be able to work with these fascinating dolphins almost every day and I hope that together we will manage to ensure their survival.”

Charlie Phillips, WDCS dolphin expert in the Moray Firth, Scotland

Bottle-nosed dolphins face a range of dangers which threaten them every day. These include the pollution of the sea by chemicals, disturbance by shipping, discarded fishing nets and the often invisible (and illegal) monofilament nets as well as harm caused by industrial and military noise under water. Bottle-nosed dolphins are large, robust animals and can develop a high degree of adaptability, but when the water temperature is as low as it is in the North Sea around the Moray Firth, a sufficient supply of food is extremely important for the future chances of survival of these wonderful creatures.

The WDCCS supports numerous projects to protect the bottle-nosed dolphin. Here is a selection of them:

[Australia](#)

[The last Bottlenosed dolphin population in the North Sea at Moray Firth, Scotland](#)

[Bottle-nosed dolphins in Cardigan Bay, Great Britain](#)

[Bottle-nosed dolphins in Croatia](#)

Conservation Status with the EU

Bottle-nosed dolphins are listed under the EC Habitats Directive on Annex II and IV. Member States are required to identify special areas of conservation (SACs) for species listed on Annex II. This measure has been formally requested for the Bottle-nosed dolphins in the Moray Firth. Species listed on Annex IV are designated as species of Community interest and stricter protection is planned for them.

No population figures are available for these species, but it has been ascertained that some of the non-migratory coastal populations have declined in numbers over the past few years.

Protection status under the Bonn Convention

The bottle-nosed dolphin is listed on appendix II. These marine mammals are also protected under ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS. France has proposed 12 Marine Protected Areas (Natura 2000 Sites) for the Bottlenose Dolphin. Oceanopolis Brest in Iroise Sea monitors a group of bottlenose dolphins by means of photo-identification to analyse home range and population structure. The Groupe d'Etudes des Cétacés du Cotentin (GECC), the Groupe Mammalogique Normand (GMN), Océan-Océan, and the association AL Lark that does research in the bay of Mont Saint Michel, carry out photo identification of bottlenose dolphins of the Bay of Mont Saint Michel and Cotentin.

The Netherlands conduct a basin study started in 2005 on the impact of pinger sounds (a technical mitigation tool to reduce dolphin by-catches in fishing gear) on a captive bottlenose dolphin of the dolphinarium Bruges (Belgium). Also, in 2006 a study has been completed to assess consequences at the population level of exposure of marine mammals to contaminants, using bottlenose dolphins as a sentinel species. It has shown that the annual accumulation rate of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in Sarasota bottlenose dolphins might be depressing the population growth rate.

At the end of 2006 a first workshop to complete a research proposal for EU LIFE+ funding took place in the UK. A second one will be held at the end of 2007. This activity was endorsed and prioritised by the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee. The research proposed would identify population structure, pattern of distribution and abundance throughout European waters and determine key habitat, reasons for shifts or declines and possibilities of recovery.

You can find more information about the bottlenosed dolphin here:

[Bottlenosed Dolphin](#)