

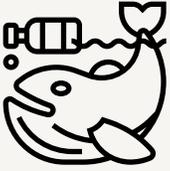
What are common threats?



Boat strikes can injure or kill dolphins, especially in busy waterways.



Entanglement in fishing gear like crab pots and nets can lead to injury or drowning.



Pollution, including plastics and chemical runoff, harms both dolphins and their food sources.

How can you help?

Stay at least 50 yards from dolphins

Move away cautiously if dolphins show signs of disturbance

Always put your engine in neutral when dolphins are near

Refrain from feeding, touching, or swimming with wild dolphins

Teach others to be Dolphin SMART!

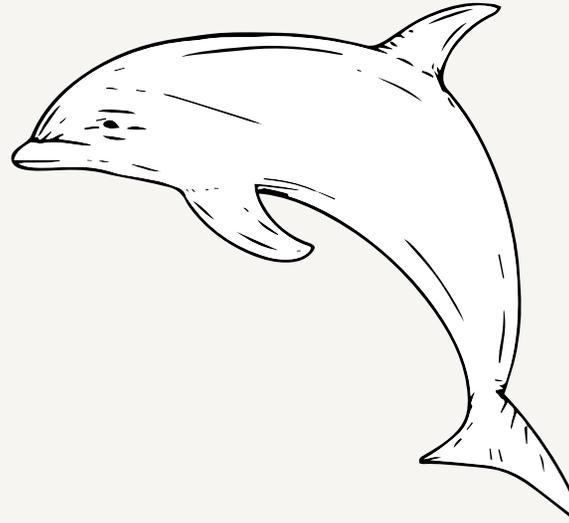


Contribute dorsal or rostrum (nose) photos to Savannah State University here!



Who is Thelma?

Thelma was the Georgia Dolphin Ecology Program's longest observed, and most famous, resident dolphin in the St. Catherine's area. She was observed in this ecosystem from 2008 - 2019. Learn more about Thelma and the data we have on her by scanning the QR code below!



Questions?

Visit this link for more:

<https://gdep.ecology.uga.edu/>

Acknowledgements

The Georgia Dolphin Ecology Program
Dr. John Schacke

The Dolphins of St. Catherine's Island

Discover how we study, protect, and learn from Georgia's resident common bottlenose dolphins



What are Common Bottlenose Dolphins?

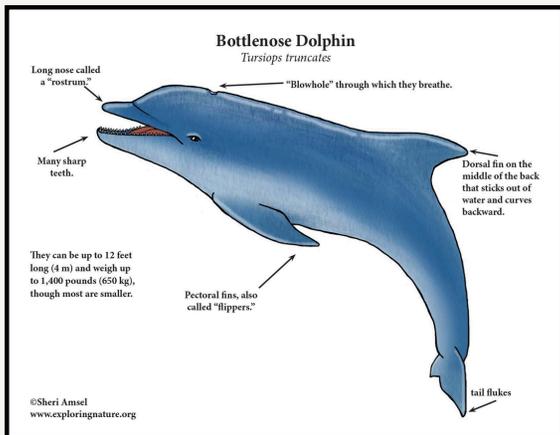
Background

Common bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) are intelligent, social marine mammals found in coastal and estuarine waters worldwide, including St. Catherine's Island, Georgia. They are protected by U.S. law under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Who are the Dolphins around St. Catherine's Island?

Resident Marine Mammals

The dolphins here are residents, meaning they live in these waters year-round, relying on estuaries, marshes, and tidal creeks for food, shelter, and raising their young. The Georgia Dolphin Ecology Program monitored them from 2008–2020, and data from this long-term project is shared with you!

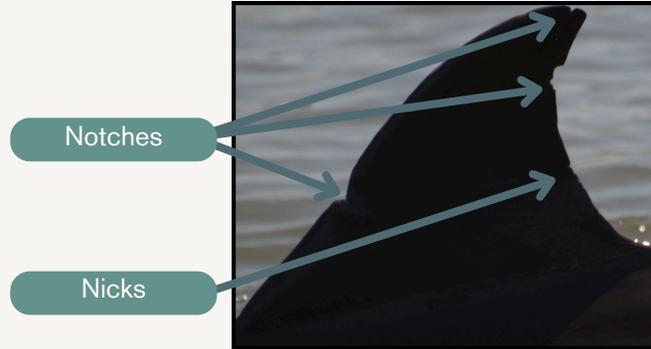


How do you identify dolphins?

Fin-ID Methods

Each dolphin has a unique dorsal fin shape, with notches, scars, and patterns. Researchers use photo-identification to study individual dolphins.

What are features to look for?



Taken under NOAA permit(s)
17245 or 21134

Why is this useful?

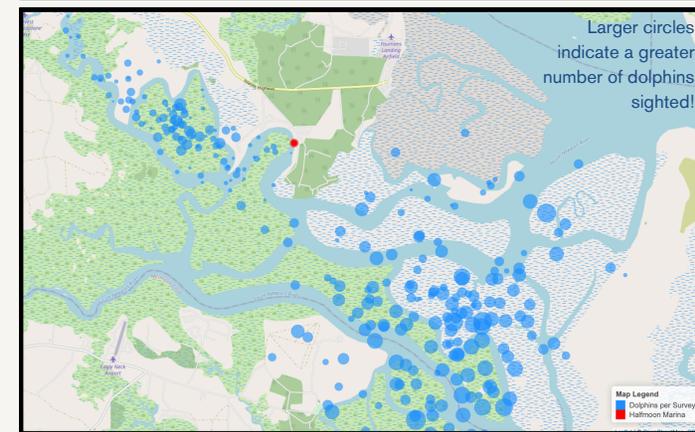
The Value of Identification

This non-invasive method helps us understand population trends and family connections. By photographing and cataloging these fins, we track who's who, monitor their health, and learn about their movements. Using long-term data and environmental conditions, we can also predict when dolphin abundance is highest.

Where can you find them?

Around St. Catherine's Island

These dolphins are regularly sighted in the North Newport River, Johnson Creek, and Sapelo Sound, and in the intricate network of tidal creeks and channels around St. Catherine's Island. Sightings tend to increase during high tide and warmer seasons, suggesting that tidal state and temperature play a role in where and when dolphins are most active.



What behaviors could you notice?

- Chuffing** - Quick, forceful exhale at the surface. (Look for a sharp puff of mist!)
- Breaching** - Leaping fully or partially out of the water. (Often playful or social!)
- Spy-hopping** - Lifting the head above water to look around. (They're curious too!)
- Mudding** - Stirring up or chasing fish onto marsh banks. (A unique Lowcountry feeding behavior!)