

TOOTHED WHALES

including **SMALL DOLPHINS**

What are TOOTHED WHALES?

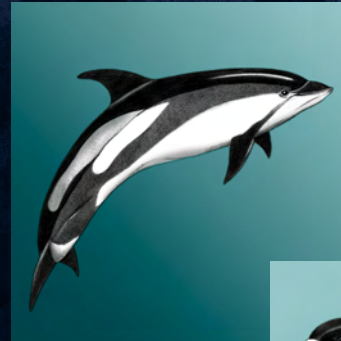
As their name suggests, these whales have teeth albeit only the adult males may actually possess them. Typically animals have a long row of even, conical teeth which grasp, but do not chew prey which is swallowed whole. The tooth shape varies with the species and type of food eaten. Typically this includes fish, squid, and other marine mammals. Examples include dolphins, porpoises, killer whales and long-finned pilot whales. Ten species of toothed whales have been known to occur in the Durham area.

What are WHITE-BEAKED DOLPHINS and the ATLANTIC WHITE-SIDED DOLPHINS?

The white-beaked dolphin is a robust dolphin with a thick, white "beak", from which it derives its name. The Atlantic white-sided dolphin is similar to the white-beaked dolphin, but slightly smaller with conspicuous white and yellow patches on its sides. The main concentrations of both species are to be found around the north and west shores of the UK.

Why are white-beaked dolphins and Atlantic white-sided dolphins of CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE?

The long history of hunting to near extinction early this century left many species of whales and dolphins with populations at a dangerously low level. Although commercial whaling has with a few exceptions ceased, the whales and dolphins have yet to recover and today face further threats, notably pollution, disturbance and overfishing. Dolphins are still taken opportunistically in small whale fisheries, such as those on the Faroe Islands. Small numbers drown in drift nets set for cod, salmon and herring; the coast of north-east England is one of the worst areas for this.



**ATLANTIC
WHITE-SIDED
DOLPHIN**
(*Lagenorhynchus
acutus*)



**WHITE-BEAKED
DOLPHIN**
(*Lagenorhynchus
albirostris*)

STATUS: *All cetaceans are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 and under the EC Habitats and Species Directive (92/43/EEC). The North and Baltic Sea populations of white-beaked and Atlantic white-sided dolphins are included on Appendix II of the Bonn Convention. The Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Sea (ASCOBANS) requires signatory countries, including the UK to "work towards" the reduction of threats to cetaceans.*

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WHITE-BEAKED DOLPHINS AND ATLANTIC WHITE-SIDED DOLPHINS IN THE DURHAM AREA

The white-beaked dolphin is the most common dolphin occurring off the north-east coast, but occurs mainly offshore. There are more recordings in the summer months when there is an apparent movement inshore, possibly associated with concentrations of food fish. Records of Atlantic white-sided dolphins in the Durham area date from 1941. Since then there have been records of six other sightings or strandings. There are a similar number of records for white-beaked dolphins dating from 1947. Undoubtedly, the dolphins occur more frequently than this and may be seen offshore by fishermen and other boat users.

White-beaked dolphins and Atlantic white-sided dolphins are at RISK from:

HUNTING.

MARINE POLLUTION - the pollutants most likely to affect dolphins include heavy metals such as mercury, pesticides and industrial chemicals, which are present in high levels in British waters.

OVERFISHING - the numbers of mackerel, herring, sprats and sand eels in British waters have all declined due to overfishing. These fish are an important food source for dolphins.

BYCATCH - fishing nets are a lethal hazard for dolphins. Up to 500 dolphins are killed every year in British and Irish drift nets.

NOISE - it is very likely that the increased level of noise from small high-powered craft and jet-skis interferes with dolphin communication.

DISTURBANCE AND COLLISIONS - an increasing number of injured dolphins are now being washed ashore after colliding with boats and propellers.

White-beaked dolphins and Atlantic white-sided dolphins BENEFIT from:

RESEARCH - further research into population levels, life histories and ecological requirements of dolphins and the threats they face.

PROTECTED AREAS - national and regional initiatives should be encouraged particularly with regard to establishing protected areas.

MEASURES TO REDUCE BYCATCH - drift nets longer than 2.5 km have already been banned in European waters and a total ban is being called for.

RECORD COLLECTION - local sightings and strandings provide valuable information about the presence and movement of dolphins in local waters.

CODES OF CONDUCT - the Environment Agency has published guidelines for boat users to minimise disturbance to cetaceans.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS:

- Report all sightings of toothed whales in the Durham area to the Marine Conservation Society, the Environment Agency and the Local Records Centre.
- Lobby for the issue of by-catch to be included in the 2002 reform of the CFP.
- Support the establishment of protected areas in the marine environment.