

Scientists believe the first ancestors of dolphins appeared more than 50 million years ago, and the first dolphins appeared about 10 million years ago. Dolphins are close relatives of whales and porpoises — and oddly enough, they are also related to hoofed land animals such as the horse.

Today, there are about 40 different species of dolphins. These playful and intelligent creatures can be found in all the oceans of the world and in some rivers.

Dolphins communicate with each other using clicks, whistles, touch, body language and tail slaps.

What do you call a dolphin gymnast? Flipper.

The bottle-nosed dolphin is one of the best-known species of dolphins. They may grow to 4 m (13 ft) in length and weigh as much as 250 kg (550 lbs).

For more information on dolphins, go to your local library and check out these books:

"Meeting Dolphins" by Kathleen Dudzinski (National Geographic Society) or "To Touch a Wild Dolphin" by Rachel Smolker (Nan A. Talese).

Why couldn't the dolphin remember anything? He had a hole in his head.

I can tune a piano but I can't tuna fish.

Many whales, such as the pilot whale and killer whale, are actually part of the dolphin family.

Hear Ye, Hear Ye

Like bats, dolphins use echolocation to locate and identify objects around them. To do this, a dolphin makes a series of sounds. The sounds bounce off objects and return as echoes that are interpreted by the dolphin's brain. Using echolocation, a dolphin can sense a fish's size, shape and even its interior bone structure. Dolphins can even find prey that is buried under the sand.

Dolphins help each other in times of trouble. When a dolphin is wounded or sick, the other dolphins in the group will remain close by and may even help the injured animal reach the surface to breathe.

SUB-CULTURE

Dolphins sleep by resting one side of their brain at a time.

Dolphins normally breathe once or twice a minute but may stay submerged for up to 20 minutes.

Dolphins spend most of their time near the surface but are capable of diving as deep as 300 m (1,000 ft).

Dolphins live for about 20 years, but some have been known to live as long as 50 years.

Dolphins are capable of short bursts of speed of nearly 40 kph (25 mph).

Humans are responsible for the deaths of thousands of dolphins every year because of fishing and pollution. Sharks pose the second greatest threat to dolphins. The third largest threat to dolphins is actually another species of dolphin — the killer whale.

Many fishermen rely on dolphins to help them locate and catch fish.

The largest dolphin is the killer whale, or orca. Orcas are one of the largest predators on earth and can grow to lengths of more than 9 m (30 ft) and weigh as much as 9,000 kg (20,000 lbs).

Sailors often regard dolphins as symbols of good luck.

Dolphins have little or no sense of smell.

Who would write the best book about porpoises? Adolf Fin.

Why do dolphins use their tails to swim? It's just a fluke.

Dolphins are among the most intelligent animals.

A dolphin's torpedo-shaped body allows it to move quickly and easily through the water.

Dolphins gather in small groups called pods or herds and rarely swim alone.

WORD SEARCH

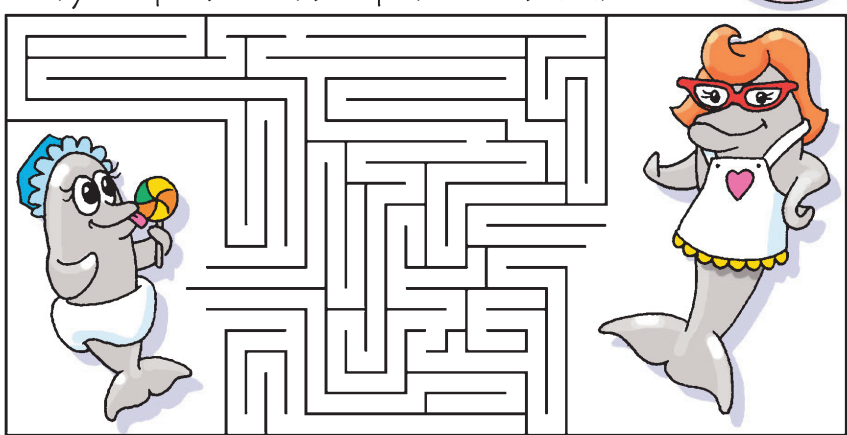
Can you find the hidden words? Search carefully because some words are backward or diagonal.

BLOWHOLE	SHARK	SWIM
PORPOISE	ORCA	DIVE
MAMMAL	FLUKE	BOB
DOLPHIN	CLICK	TAIL
MELON	ECHO	POD
WHALE	HERD	FIN

B L O W H O L B A N A N A
P O R P O I S M L F A N S
S H A A K D R E H C I D E
A S H A R P L L R S O N G
M A M M A O B O B L W D M
S A N D H O R N P F A I A
M O O W S L W H A L E V M
A P O R P O I S E U C E M
C L I C K N T A L K H F A
B U B B L E R A T E O W L

BABY BOTTLE

Can you help this bottlenose dolphin reach his mom?



Head To Tail

The main difference between dolphins and porpoises is the shape of their teeth and snout. Dolphins have cone-shaped teeth and a long snout, while porpoises have flat teeth and a rounded snout.

The bulging forehead of a dolphin is called its "melon." The melon is used by the dolphin to focus and direct the clicks used for echolocation.

A dolphin's nose is called a blowhole and is located at the top of its head.

The tail of a dolphin is made of two fleshy fins called flukes.

Why did the silly kid stop reading about dolphins? He didn't see the porpoise in it.

Email us at: jeff@shortcuts.com

View hundreds of past issues at www.shortcutscomic.com.