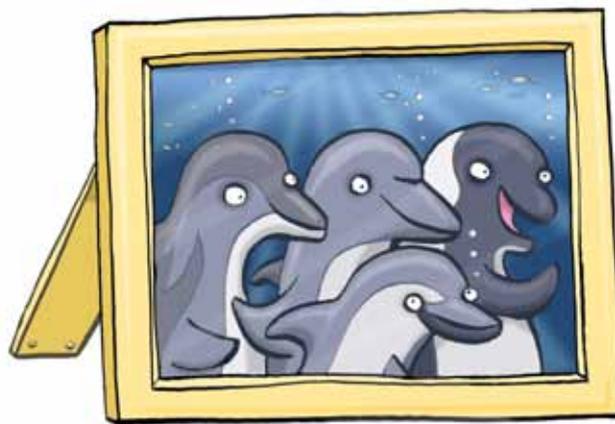


# The River Dolphin Diploma

activity pack

It's time to  
become a  
river dolphin expert!



## River Dolphins in danger!

Most whales and dolphins live in the sea. But there is a small group that live in fresh water rivers and lakes.

River dolphins survive in South America and Asia, and are amongst the most endangered mammals on Earth.

In 2007, the Chinese river dolphin was declared extinct - the first dolphin species lost due to mankind. We need to redouble our efforts to protect the world's surviving river dolphin species.

## So what is a River Dolphin Diploma?

A River Dolphin Diploma is an award for children. It shows that the participant has a good knowledge of river dolphins, and certifies that he / she has been actively involved in the protection of dolphins. We think this is worth honouring.

## How are River Dolphin Diplomas awarded?

It's simple and it's fun! To receive a River Dolphin Diploma, children need to correctly answer all the questions in our Dolphin Quiz and then carry out an activity that will help whale and dolphin conservation – we'll provide lots of ideas to help!

1. Part 1 of the diploma is the Dolphin Quiz, found on pages 2,3 and 4. Photocopy enough copies for the children (you might like them to work individually or in groups) along with the species fact sheets (pages 7-10) which will help them answer the questions.
2. Answers are provided for you on page 5 and 6. You may like to mark them all yourself or ask the children to swap their quizzes with one another and mark their classmate's.
3. Part 2 is the Dolphin Activity. You'll find a number of ideas on page 11 but let your imagination run! If you have any questions or need advice please don't hesitate to contact WDC - we're happy to help.
4. Once you've completed both parts, fill in and return the form on page 12 by post, or email the contact below providing the same details that are requested on the form. In return you'll receive an award certificate to mark your achievement!

## More information...

.. and material to help you teach about dolphins can be found on [whales.org/kidzone](http://whales.org/kidzone). And WDC can also provide you with free resources including PowerPoint presentation with notes, DVD, and activity posters.

## Use the Internet to promote your activities

There are many websites, and social media sites, where you can publish details of your event / activity along with images, and you can email your friends and family with details. Please make sure you get an adult to help you if you're under 16.

## Contact

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any additional questions or are in need of advice. We look forward to hearing about any related activities and are always happy to help where we can by providing information and materials for you to distribute.

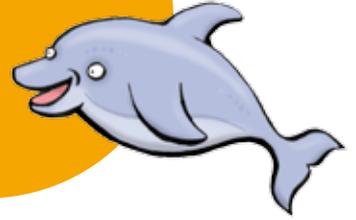
**Alison Wood**  
**River Dolphin Programme Lead**  
**WDC UK**  
**38 St Paul Street**  
**Chippenham SN15 1LJ**



## Dolphin Diploma Part 1: the Dolphin Quiz

Dolphins come in all sorts of shapes, colours and sizes and habitats where they live. Now you can check what you have learned about freshwater dolphins in the Amazon.

Please read the questions carefully and tick the answer(s) you think are right!



### 1. General

Can you name one thing that makes the Amazon River dolphin look very different to the Bottlenose dolphin? (Clue - more than one answer is correct!)

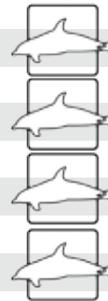
- a) The Amazon River dolphin has a longer beak
- b) The Amazon River dolphin doesn't have a blowhole
- c) The Amazon River dolphin is often pink
- d) The Amazon River dolphin doesn't have a beak



### 2. Communication

Dolphins are very social animals and like to spend time together. When they are with each other it is important that they can communicate. Do you know how they do this? (Clue – more than one answer is correct!)

- a) With clicks and whistles
- b) Using words
- c) Using body language
- d) By blowing bubbles



### 3. Threats

Day to day pressure on aquatic species is causing a decline in their populations, so we have to avoid doing things that harm dolphins. Humans are the cause of many threats that dolphins face. Why are Amazon River dolphins declining? (Clue – more than one answer is correct!)

- a) Because sharks and caimans eat them
- b) Because they are accidentally caught in fishing nets
- c) Because people kill them for fish bait
- d) Because they are confused by noise from boats



#### 4. Answer in your own words why fishing nets are a problem for river dolphins.

#### 5. Protecting and conserving dolphins

Around the world many people and institutions like WDC, Whale and Dolphin Conservation, are dedicated to the protection and conservation of dolphins, so that future generations of people can appreciate these intelligent and magical animals. What can we do in the Amazon to help protect and take care of the dolphins?  
(Clue – more than one answer is correct!)

a) Catch them and keep them in pools to breed

b) Talk with fishermen and persuade them to release dolphins that get caught in nets

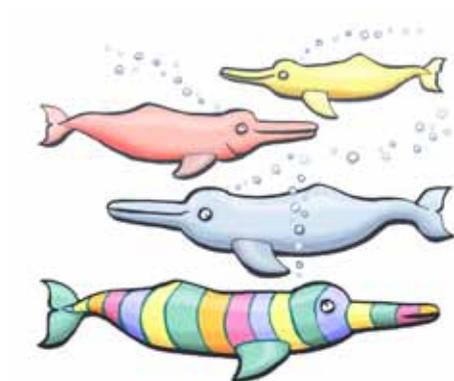
c) Control motor boat speed

d) Persuade people not to kill them to use as fish bait



If you have more ideas about how we might help protect them, please write it down here:

- 1.
- 2.



## 6. Other dolphins of the world

As you have learnt in the diploma, there are different types of dolphins in the oceans and rivers of the world. Compare and list the differences between a the bottlenose dolphin (a marine dolphin), and the Amazon River dolphin:  
(NB these images are at different scales).



Bottlenose dolphin	Amazon River dolphin

## River Dolphin Diploma Quiz – answers and notes

### 1. General (correct answers are ‘a’ and ‘c’)

There are over 30 species of dolphins around the world, with great characteristic variation between them. Amazon River dolphins have long beaks (which are lined with peg shaped teeth).

Some adult Amazon River dolphins are pink. The calves are born grey but this changes as they grow older. Some are grey or greyish pink and some individuals are bubblegum pink! They also have a hump on their backs rather than a well-developed dorsal fin. Their necks and bodies are very flexible and paddle-shaped flippers capable of intricate movements. This allows them to enter the flooded forest and swim easily amongst the roots and branches to hunt for fish.

### 2. Communication (correct answers are ‘a’ and ‘c’)

Dolphins live in a world dominated by sound, which travels better than light underwater. Although most dolphins have good vision they can’t always rely on sight because waters can be full of sediment and murky. Thus visibility in rivers can be poor. So, vocal communication is very important to them.

Although they don’t have vocal cords, dolphins can produce a range of calls, which might include greeting and warning calls. The variety of noises they make include whistles, barks, squeaks, clicks, croaks and grunts.

They also use body language to signal to one another, including slapping the water, clapping their jaws, and twisting their bodies.

### 3. Threats (correct answers are ‘b’, ‘c’ and ‘d’)

Dolphins face a number of man-made threats ranging from hunting to capture for display in marine parks to prey-depletion to pollution to bycatch (incidental capture in fishing nets).

Of the multiple choice options, fishing nets are the biggest killer of whales and dolphins worldwide. Once caught up in a net, or other fishing gear, a dolphin may not be able to reach the surface to breathe and will therefore drown or suffocate.

Sadly, Amazon River dolphins are also deliberately killed so that they can be used for bait to capture catfish.

And sound is so important to dolphins who rely on echolocation to navigate and find prey, that noise from boats and other sources can significantly disturb and confuse them.

#### 4. Bycatch (accidentally being caught in fishing nets and drowning)

Although dolphins look very similar to large fish (especially sharks), they are, in fact, mammals. So, like all mammals, they have lungs with which to breathe air and cannot breathe underwater.

At the surface of the water, a dolphin will open the blowhole on top of its head to breathe through. But, if trapped underwater by a net, the blowhole will remain shut and the dolphin will suffocate.

Nets can also cause significant injury to dolphins.

#### 5. Protecting and conserving dolphins (correct answers are b, c and d )

Controlling motor boat speed is important to reduce noise and prevent accidental collisions with dolphins and other wildlife. And public support for an issue no doubt helps to influence authority. So awareness raising activities such as talking to and educating local people, plus organising special events and other publicity are also vital.

Sadly one of the greatest threats to botoes is that they are killed so that their carcass can be used to attract fish which can then be caught and sold.

#### 6. Other dolphins of the world

Bottlenose dolphin	Amazon River dolphin
Grey	Pink (or grey-pink)
Lives in the ocean	Lives in freshwater rivers
Grows up to 3.9 metres	Grows up to 2.6 metres
Obvious tall dorsal fin	Very low dorsal fin
Very good eyesight	Can see
Teeth all conical	Has different types of teeth
Neck is fused	Has flexible neck



#### Did You know:

The rarest river dolphin in the world is now the Indus River dolphin found only in Pakistan.

The Chinese river dolphin is now extinct.

The Bolivian river dolphin is the only dolphin found in Bolivia, a land-locked country!



## Dolphin Diploma quiz: fact-sheet 1

### The Amazon River dolphin – A dolphin at home in freshwater

#### Names

The Amazon River dolphin has a scientific name which is *Inia geoffrensis* it also has a variety of names given to it by local people and these vary from country to country. They include the pink dolphin, boto, bouto, bufeo and Inia.

Adults grow to between 2.1 and 2.6 metres.



Photo: Fernando Trujillo

#### What does the Amazon River dolphin look like?

The boto is a robust dolphin with chubby cheeks, small eyes and a long slender beak that curves down slightly towards the tip. It is unique amongst cetaceans for having different types of teeth in its jaw; those in the front are the usual simple conical shape whilst those in the back are designed to aid in the crushing of prey items. The melon (forehead) is bulbous, and the animal is able to change the shape of its melon. Unlike other dolphins, this dolphin's neck is very flexible and can move from side to side. The boto has a long dorsal ridge and very low dorsal fin. The flippers are paddle-shaped, broad and have blunt tips, while the tail flukes are triangular, broad and have pointed tips. One of the most striking characteristics of the boto is its colouration, ranging from white/grey to pink on the dorsal surface, and a paler colour below. Some individuals however are a vivid pink colour. The colouration is highly variable and is affected by age and viewing conditions.

#### They are found only in rivers of the Amazon and Orinoco river basins of South America ...

Botos are found in rivers, lakes and flooded rain forests of Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela.

#### Threats

Botos are being hunted in Brazil and their bodies used as fish bait. This is a very serious threat to the future survival of botos as it is spreading throughout the Brazilian Amazon and large numbers of botos are being killed. It is illegal to kill botos but the law is not enforced in the Amazon where many people live in remote areas. The most widespread threat to river dolphins is fisheries - they are accidentally caught in fishing nets. This issue is known as bycatch. Other threats include habitat loss and human disturbance, including being hit by boats and other vessels.

#### Fascinating Facts

River dolphins are amongst some of the most endangered mammals in the world. One has already gone extinct in recent times - the Chinese river dolphin or baiji was declared extinct in 2007.

Amazon River dolphins are the largest of the river dolphins growing up to 2.6 m long and weighing up to 180kg.

Amazon River dolphins do not have any predators, except for humans.

Amazon folk law in some areas such as Colombia plays an important role in protecting them from harm. The boto is believed to be an enchanted magical creature. It is a shape shifter and so from time to time can take human form. It is thus taboo for local people to harm a dolphin - it would be like harming a person.

Botos use echolocation to find their way around and hunt fish in the murky river waters. This is the system used by most cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) to find food, navigate and communicate by sending out clicks and using the echo that comes back to create a 'sound picture'. Sometimes also referred to as 'sonar'.

## Dolphin Diploma quiz: fact-sheet 2

### The bottlenose dolphin – the best-known dolphin of all?

#### What does a bottlenose dolphin look like?

The easiest way of recognising a bottlenose dolphin is to look out for an obvious dark and curved-back dorsal fin on a lively grey dolphin! The shape of their dorsal fin, along with nicks, scratches and other markings on their skin, are what researchers use to identify individual bottlenose dolphins.

Bottlenose dolphins from different parts of the world are very different in sizes. There can be as much as a two metre difference between some adults, ranging from 1.9 to 3.9 metres in length. Some of the world's largest bottlenose dolphins, for example, live around the United Kingdom. They can be a good metre longer than those living off Florida in the USA, and will probably be fatter with shorter beaks.

There are two different species of bottlenose dolphin – the common bottlenose dolphin and the Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin.



Photo: Charlie Phillips/WDC

#### Bottlenose dolphins hang out with friends ...

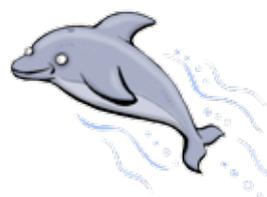
Although they can be found on their own, they tend to live in family groups called 'schools'. They are very active swimmers and are often seen bowriding (riding on the pressure waves at the front of boats), surfing, lobtailing (slapping their tails) and breaching (jumping out of the water, often falling back sideways with a big splash). They are able to leap several metres out of the water. They are sometimes seen playing 'games' with things such as seaweed, coral or other animals, and some Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins carry sponges on the ends of their beaks to protect them when looking for food on the sea bed!

#### Where do they live?

Bottlenose dolphins are found in many places around the world although not in polar regions. In fact, they can be found off all the continents, and in-between, except around Antarctica. Common bottlenose dolphins are found in most warm to tropical oceans whilst Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins are found in the waters around India, Australia and South-China.

#### Bottlenose dolphins under threat

Major threats include "drive hunts" where schools of dolphins are driven into shallow bays by people in boats and are either killed for their meat or sold to the captivity industry. Habitat loss, human disturbance, chemical pollution and entanglement in fishing nets also threaten bottlenose dolphins.



## Dolphin Diploma quiz: fact-sheet 3

### The common dolphin – no longer common

#### Common dolphins are amazing acrobats ...

Common dolphins are often found in large active groups. They are very energetic and acrobatic, and can seem to spend as much time above the water as they do under it.

They can be seen and heard from long distances, as they jump and splash around. Their loud, high-pitched squeaks can often be heard above the surface of the water.

They usually dive for short periods of 10 seconds to 2 minutes, although dives of 8 minutes have been recorded.



Photo: Ingrid N Visser/www.orcaresearch.org

#### What does a common dolphin look like?

Common dolphins can be easily recognised by the hourglass/criss-cross pattern of yellow, white, grey and black on their sides. They have a dark V-shaped cape under the dorsal fin, dark fins and fluke and yellow/white patches on their sides and belly.

There are both long-beaked and short-beaked common dolphins. Adult common dolphins grow to between 1.7 and 2.4 meters in length.

#### Common dolphins are spread out across the world

Common Dolphins are found in many places with lots of different populations in all oceans. They are known as an off-shore species so aren't usually found near the coast, and are rarely seen in waters shallower than 180m. In some areas common dolphin populations can be seen all year around, in other areas they are only seen at certain times of the year.

#### Common dolphins are no longer common ...

Common dolphins in the Mediterranean Sea used to be just that...common. But now, conservationists believe that the Mediterranean common dolphin is one of the most endangered dolphins in Europe and could face extinction if urgent action isn't taken.

Their main threat is being accidentally caught in fishing nets (which is known as bycatch). Other threats include habitat loss, human disturbance and there not being enough food for them.



## Dolphin Diploma quiz: fact-sheet 4

### The orca – the largest dolphin on Earth!

#### What does an orca look like?

Orcas (or killer whales) are large, stocky, and heavy, with paddle-shaped flippers. Their jet black, white and grey markings, and the males' very tall dorsal fin (up to 1.8m or 6ft high), make them hard to muddle up with other species.

Researchers use the dorsal fins to identify individual orcas. Different shapes, sizes, nicks and scars help them remember which whale is which. Saddle-patches (the patch behind the dorsal fin) are also unique to individuals.

The orca is beyond doubt, the largest member of the dolphin family with newborn calves measuring 2.1 – 2.5 metres and adults measuring between 5.5 – 9.8 metres.



#### Mum rules!

Orcas are very social dolphins and stay together their entire lives in family pods that are led by matriarchs (female leaders). Orcas can be very acrobatic and are extremely fast swimmers (almost as fast as a galloping race horse).

Like all dolphins, orcas communicate with each other using body language and sound. They don't have vocal cords and can't talk to one another in the same way as humans do but they can make a wide variety of noises including whistles, barks, squeaks, clicks, croaks and grunts.

Orca pods are known to have their own "dialects" (which are a little like individual languages) and sound different to one another.

#### Free Willy !

Their main threat is being caught to be put on display in marine parks. Other threats include the ruin of their habitat, there being less food availability for them, and both chemical and noise pollution.

#### Noise Annoys!

Sound is extremely important in their underwater world, probably more so than sight, because it is often dark and visibility can be very poor. They use sound to communicate, find their prey and find their way around. This is why other underwater noises, made by boats for example, can disturb them.



## Dolphin Diploma Part 2: Dolphin Activity

Knowing about dolphins is fantastic but, in order to best protect them, action is also needed!

Below are just a few ideas for children's activities that they could undertake with your help and be awarded with their diploma:

### Make an origami dolphin

WDC is collecting origami dolphins to help captive dolphins in the EU. See [www.whales.org/kidzone](http://www.whales.org/kidzone) for more info!

### Sponsored silence

How about organising a sponsored silence (or other sponsored activity) and get sponsored by family and friends for every minute you stay quiet. WDC's events team have many ideas and can provide you with sponsorship forms and information.

### Poster Display

On your own, or with a group of friends, why not create a range of posters that you can display in your school hall/classroom or maybe at a club meeting you go to (such as Brownies or Cubs). You could show the different species of dolphins there are, where they live and what threats they face. Let people know how they can help!

### Artwork Auction

In your art class at school, perhaps you can create some dolphin artwork – paintings, models, mosaics etc. Then hold a fun auction to raise awareness and a few funds!

### Raffle or Sale

Run a raffle - maybe asking friends and family if they can donate goodies (books, toys, biscuits and chocolates etc.) for you to use as prizes. Or you could organise a cake or 'healthy eating' sale at school break time!

### What happens to any money you raise?

Any money you send will be put to good use helping to fund dolphin protection projects around the world. This might be a project in Brazil to tackle the increasing hunt of botos for bait, or educating children at our Natutama project centre in Colombia.

Any funds should be sent to...

River Dolphin Diploma  
Alison Wood  
WDC  
38 St Paul Street  
Chippenham SN15 1LJ

Keep an eye on  
[www.whales.org/kidzone](http://www.whales.org/kidzone)  
for the latest ways to  
help!

WHALE AND  
DOLPHIN  
CONSERVATION  
**WDC**

Please include the response form found on the following page.

## River Dolphin Diploma response form

To claim your award certificate, please print off, complete and return this form to the address at the bottom of the page (or fax to 01249 449501).

Full contact name of teacher or parent:

Position (if applicable):

Address:

Postcode:

Email address:

Number of children that took part \*:

Age of children (please provide dates of birth if possible\*\*):

Dolphin Activity (please include DATE, LOCATION, ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION and ANY RESULTS - number of visitors to your event, donations collected, feedback received for example):

\* We'll need names if they'd like a certificate each.

\*\* If you have been working with a class of children, their ages are enough.

PLEASE SEND ANY IMAGES OF YOUR EVENT - WE MAY USE THEM IN OUR PUBLICATIONS OR WEBSITE.  
PLEASE NOTE THAT WE REQUIRE WRITTEN PERMISSION AND A PARENT/GUARDIAN'S SIGNATURE TO USE ANY PHOTOS OF CHILDREN.

WHALE AND  
DOLPHIN  
CONSERVATION



Please tick the box if you would rather not receive any further information from WDC by post  or email