

Gower Marine Mammals Project

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A Guide to Commoner Cetaceans

It's very difficult to identify species at sea. These photographs and identification hints may help you to note down diagnostic features that can be used to work out what you've seen at a later date (even if you haven't got a clue what it is at the time).

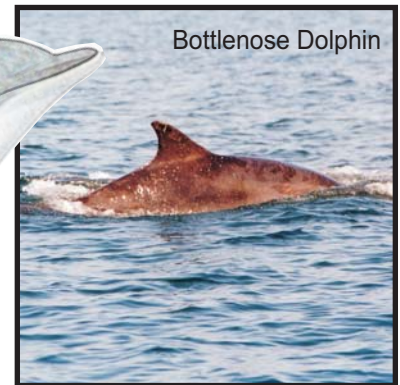
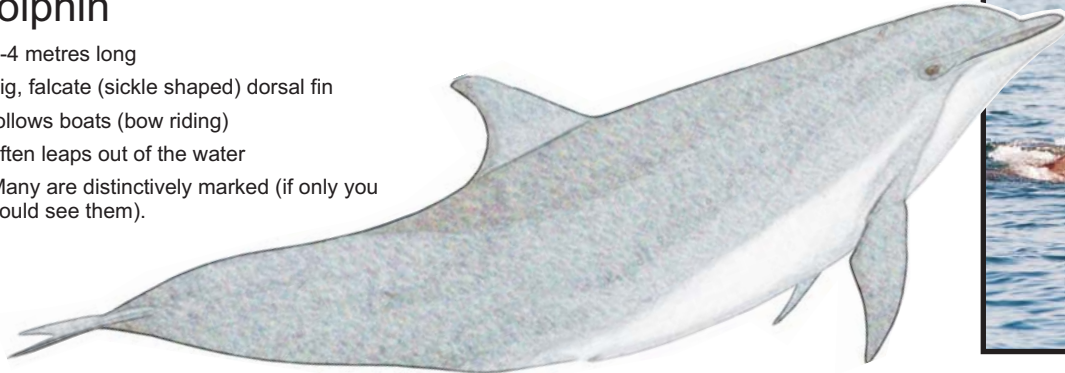
Remember, any information is useful, however limited. Please note down everything you saw. The more we know about the mammals of the Bristol Channel, the better we can protect them.

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Dolphin

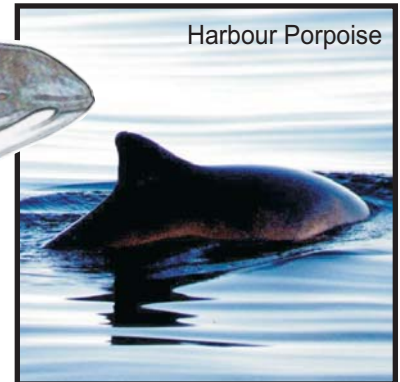
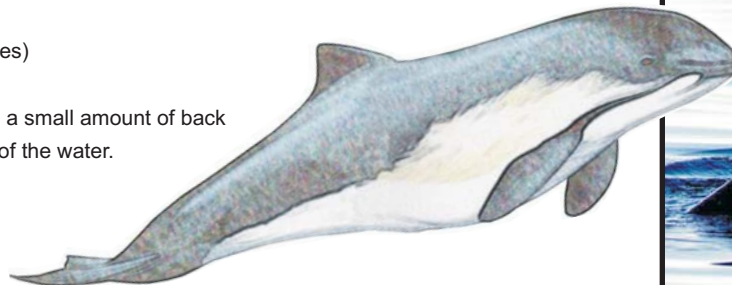
- 3-4 metres long
- big, falcate (sickle shaped) dorsal fin
- follows boats (bow riding)
- often leaps out of the water
- Many are distinctively marked (if only you could see them).



Bottlenose Dolphin

Porpoise

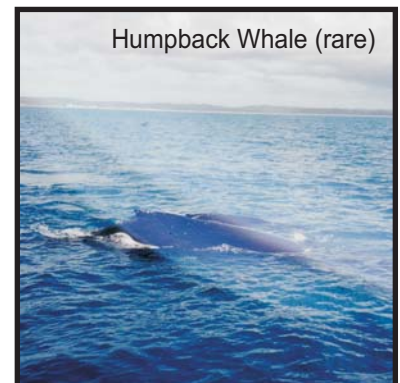
- the smallest of the dolphins (2 metres)
- dorsal fin is broad based
- usually you will only see the fin and a small amount of back
- shuns boats, and doesn't jump out of the water.



Harbour Porpoise

Whale

- 4-25 metres
- dorsal fin can be anything from huge (killer whale) to almost non-existent (humpback whale)
- dorsal fin can be located half way along the back OR near the tail
- the blow (an explosive exhalation of breath) may be visible (looks like steam). This may be single or double, angled backwards, forwards or vertically, and may be "bushy" or high and thin.



Humpback Whale (rare)