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Swimming with Dolphins

GREAT STORY & COOL FACTS



Swimming with Dolphins

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Swimming with Dolphins

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S.O.S. Dolphin

by Laurence Gillot
Illustrated by Rocco

“Swim close to me,” said Pablo’s dad, putting on his snorkel mask. “And when I give the signal, we dive. Got it?”

“Okaaaaaaay!” Pablo replied, his voice muffled in his snorkel mask.

Pablo and his dad dove into the warm ocean water. It was clear and blue, with bright, colorful fish swimming in schools below them. The view was incredible!



Pablo loved going on underwater adventures with his dad. He always showed Pablo lots of cool things, like odd-looking shells and fish that were hiding.

While they were exploring, Pablo suddenly felt a tap on his leg. It was the signal! Pablo took a deep breath and dipped his head under the water like a duck.

His dad pointed to a starfish in the sand. He picked it up and put it in Pablo's hand. Suddenly, he grabbed Pablo's arm and pointed his finger toward . . .

"A dolphin!" thought Pablo.

The dolphin was coming toward them. It was gigantic compared to Pablo! His dad quickly pulled up Pablo toward the surface of the water.





As their heads popped up out of the water, they heard short, piercing cries: “EEEE! EEEE! EEEE!”

It was the dolphin talking! It was so close that Pablo could see its huge head. Its teeth looked sharp. Pablo felt scared.

His dad seemed a bit worried, too. Pulling up his snorkel, he said, “Normally, a dolphin will not attack humans, but safety comes first! Let’s go back toward the beach!”

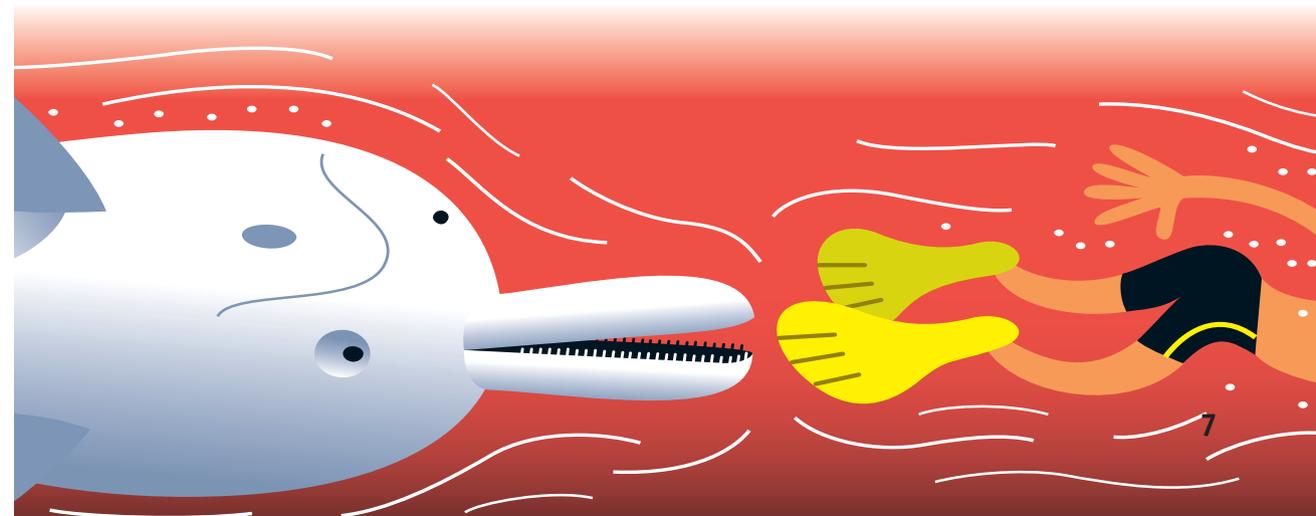
As they swam, Pablo looked back. The dolphin was following them!

“What if it takes a bite out of my leg?” Pablo wondered. The thought made him panic, and he kicked his flippers faster and faster.

“I can touch bottom!” called out his dad.

Feeling like he could barely breathe, Pablo kicked the last few feet to his dad.

The dolphin jumped up out of the water. “EEEE! EEEE! EEEE!” it said, wagging its head back and forth.



“It looks like it wants to tell us something,” Pablo’s dad whispered.

“It’s diving! It’s coming right at us!” Pablo yelled.

Pablo and his dad stood there, frozen, as the dolphin got closer and closer and . . . then was at their feet, pushing at his dad’s legs with its snout.

Pablo suddenly understood what the dolphin wanted. “It wants us to follow it!” Pablo cried. Then, without thinking, he grabbed onto its top fin and away they went!

“Pablo!” his dad cried. “Let go!”

It was too late! The dolphin swam away—with Pablo on it! It seemed to know exactly where it was going.

The dolphin zoomed through the waves. Pablo was panting hard. He did not know whether to panic or laugh! He could feel the dolphin’s smooth skin under his hands. Pablo’s heart beat like a drum.



Pablo's dad was on the shore. He was running like a crazy person, waving his arms in the air, trying to follow them.

The dolphin turned and swam onto the beach. There, on the sand, was a small dolphin!

Pablo got off the dolphin and moved closer. The little dolphin was stranded between two rocks!



Pablo realized it must be her baby! Peering closer, he noticed that the baby had something in its mouth.

Pablo ripped off his diving mask and bent down close to the little animal. A piece of rusty metal was stuck in its jaws.

“Ouch!” Pablo whispered to the baby. “That must hurt, poor fella.”

Just then Pablo's dad caught up. He looked very upset. “Pablo! Are you all right?” he said.

“Yes, I'm OK. But this baby dolphin is not!” he replied.

Tell Me About Yourself

I'm a dolphin!

I have lungs and a spine like cats, dogs, and humans.

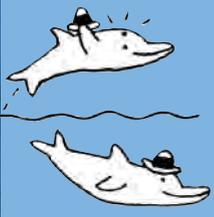
I live in the sea, just like fish do. But I am not a fish. I am a mammal!

I am a sea mammal.

I can stay underwater for 10 to 15 minutes without breathing. Then I go back up to the surface to take a big gulp of air.

My skin is very soft, I love to be stroked, and I can hear very well.

Under my skin, I have a layer of fat to keep my blood warm.



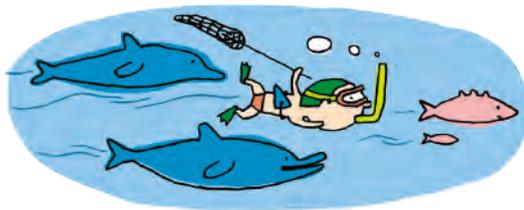
There is a little opening at the top of my head. It is called a *blowhole*. It allows me to breathe when I come up out of the water. When I dive, the blowhole closes.

What Do You Do All Day?



Oh, I'm very busy! First of all, I'm never alone. I always swim with my friends in a group called a pod. Together we frolic and play. We love to have fun.

When we're hungry, we hunt. Watch out, we swim very fast! It comes in handy when we're chasing schools of fish.

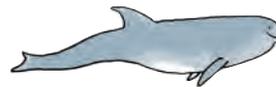


If one of us gets hurt, a friend helps the wounded one stay on the surface. Otherwise we could sink and drown!

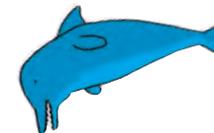


There are many different kinds of dolphins, including:

Risso's dolphin



bottlenose dolphin



pilot whale



Yes, it's really a type of dolphin, even though it's called a pilot whale!

Dolphins belong to the animal family called **Delphinidae** [del-FIN-uh-day].

Dolphins also belong in the animal order of **cetaceans** [suh-TAY-shins], which includes whales such as:

sperm whale



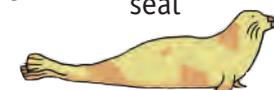
gray whale



beluga whale

Other mammals that live in the sea include:

seal

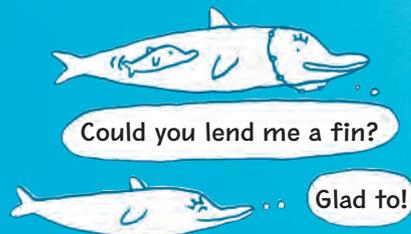


walrus

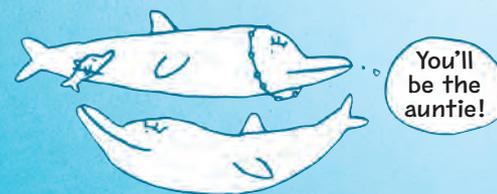




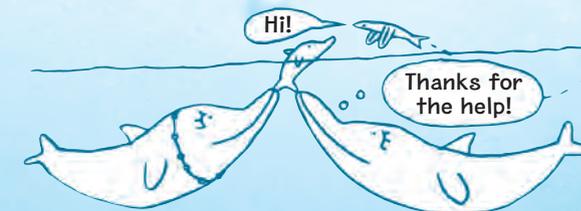
Before it is born, a baby dolphin grows in its mother's belly. Dolphin babies are born in the water, of course!



When she is ready to give birth, the mother dolphin leaves the pod with another female dolphin known as the auntie.



When the baby is born, the tail comes out first, the head last. And as soon as it is completely out...



... the auntie and the mother quickly help the baby up to the surface so it can breathe. They have to hurry so it does not drown!

How do they survive?

A mother dolphin keeps a close eye on her baby. She never leaves it alone. Her little one always swims by her side.

And if she has to go off to find food, she leaves the baby in the auntie's care.

The little dolphin needs its mother. It nurses on her milk for one or two years. It will not eat fish until it is six months old.

What about Baby Dolphins?

How Do Dolphins Communicate?

Did you know that dolphins are very intelligent? They can even communicate with one another.

Dolphins do not have lips and voice boxes to make words like we do. But they can make whistles that sound like clicks, moans, trills, grunts, and creaks.

Echolocation

Dolphins also have a cool skill, similar to sonar, called **echolocation** [eh-koe-low-KAY-shin].

Dolphins make clicking noises. These clicks create underwater sound waves. The waves bounce off objects, like animals swimming in the ocean, and bounce back to the dolphin. Listening to these bouncing sound waves helps the dolphin figure out what and where the object is.

Echolocation also helps dolphins find food or know when enemies are near.

Signature whistles

A dolphin's whistle is like a fingerprint; each dolphin has one of its very own, called a **signature whistle**.

When a baby dolphin is born, its mother whistles a lot to the baby so that it will learn the mother's special whistle.

Sometime between one and six months of age, a dolphin starts making its own signature whistle.

Dolphins listen to one another's signature whistles, and then they whistle back, or go find out what the whistling dolphin wants.

Dolphins in trouble make their signature whistles very loudly.

Making Waves

Sonar stands for **S**ound **n**avigation **a**nd **r**anging. Like echolocation, sonar uses sound and echoes to find things underwater. Submarines use sonar just like dolphins use echolocation.

Sound waves bounce off objects. When sound waves are underwater, sometimes you can actually feel the waves.

Want to see how this works?

Needed: A parent Bathtub or kitchen sink
Cookie sheet with about 10 to 12
Hammer inches of water

- 1 At one end of the bathtub or sink, have your parent hold the cookie sheet and the hammer under water. (Both must be under water.) Put your hand in the water at the other end.
- 2 Have your parent tap the hammer gently against the cookie sheet. Try to feel the underwater sound wave with your hand.
- 3 You can also use two cookie sheets, one on each side. Experiment with the wave strength while holding the sheets at different levels in the water. Each time the waves might feel different.

Dolphin Tales



There are many stories about dolphins rescuing humans at sea.

It has been said that a pod of dolphins saved two fishermen by pushing their broken boat all the way to shore—with them in it! Dolphins have even led people lost at sea to safety.

Dolphins have a special place in our histories and our hearts, not only for their intelligence, but also for their apparent kindness.

Perhaps someday, scientists and dolphins will be able to communicate better with each other. If that happens, we may be able to learn a lot more about dolphins—and maybe they can learn more about us!