



Make a difference
Help protect
bottlenose dolphins

IN THE BAY OF ISLANDS



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Help protect our spectacular bottlenose dolphins.

Seeing bottlenose dolphins and other marine wildlife in their natural environment can be a thrilling experience.

In our excitement, we sometimes forget that our presence has an effect on wildlife. Just like us, dolphins need space to find food, choose mates, raise young and rest.

When we get too close, approach too fast, or make too much noise, we may be disrupting these activities and causing the animals unnecessary stress. In some cases, what we do may threaten them.

Follow the Marine Mammals Protection Regulations and local guidelines in the presence of bottlenose dolphins and other marine mammals.

The most commonly seen  marine mammal in the Bay of Islands is the bottlenose dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*.



Photo: Elke Reufels

Why do bottlenose dolphins in the Bay of Islands need special protection?

Thirty-three species of marine mammals have been recorded from Northland waters. The Bay of Islands is a special place for bottlenose dolphins because it provides food and sheltered bays to look after their young. All marine mammals are fully protected and need space. But bottlenose dolphins in the Bay of Islands need extra care—they rely on skippers to make good decisions on the water because they live their lives where people play, fish, dive and swim.

A recent scientific study shows that numbers of bottlenose dolphins in the Bay of Islands have fallen by 65% since the late 1990s. Three quarters of all calves in the bay die before they start to become independent from their mums. We don't know what factors impact on the bigger picture for the local population – pollution or limited prey availability could play a role. But we know that bottlenose dolphins are vulnerable to disturbance. For more information visit:

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/science-publications/conservation-publications/marine-and-coastal/responses-of-bottlenose-dolphin-to-vessel-activity-in-northland/>



Photo: Elke Reufels, DOC

What is a disturbance?

Disturbance is when we interfere with an animal's ability to hunt, feed, communicate, socialize, rest, breed, or care for its young. These are critical life processes, necessary for the dolphins' wellbeing.

The Bay of Islands is a busy place in summer. Sadly, it is common in the Bay of Islands for boats to drive through the middle of a dolphin pod at high speed – because either they haven't seen the dolphins or they think they will get out of the way. Many people approach the dolphins to see watch them from a close distance.

Recent scientific research shows that bottlenose dolphin in the bay spend 86% of day light hours in

the presence of boats. Summer is the time when most dolphins give birth. If dolphin mothers are disturbed all day they cannot do the things they need to take care of themselves or their calves.



Do not drive through a pod of dolphins, scan ahead for dolphin fins and slow down instead.

We need to minimize our impact.

Do not try to get in close for that photo opportunity. By making others aware that the Bay's bottlenose dolphins need space you can help to make a difference.

You can help...

Follow regulations and local guidelines at all times.

When boating in the Bay of Islands, always respect the local guidelines around bottlenose dolphins

These are designed to reduce the risk of disturbing the dolphins so we can enjoy the dolphins, now and for years to come

- Keep a watch for dolphins – especially around Tapeka. Slow down early and gradually
- If you are passing through an area with dolphins give the dolphins a wide berth
- If you would like to observe bottlenose dolphins switch off your motor and give the animals plenty of space – this lets the dolphins carry on with important activities like nursing and catching fish. If they are not interested leave them alone.
- Give dolphin mums and calves extra space. If you spot a dolphin less than half the size of an adult, keep your vessel 100 m away from the mother and calf.
- Give bottlenose dolphins a break from all boats between 11:30 am and 1:30 pm – do not approach them during this time.

In the Bay of Islands swimming with dolphins is permitted under a strict set of rules to minimise adverse effects on the animals. If you want to swim with bottlenose dolphins book a tour with a permitted marine mammal tourism operator. These operators hold commercial marine mammal tourism permits administered by the Department of Conservation which means they need to adhere to stricter rules than recreational boats and they are being monitored and their staff are trained to approach marine mammals without unduly disturbing them.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Pewhairangi/Bay of Islands Office

Phone: 09 407 0300

Email: bayofislandsbooking@doc.govt.nz

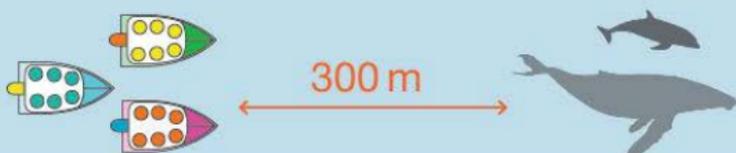
www.doc.govt.nz/marinemammals

Simple rules for boaties when interacting with whales and dolphins

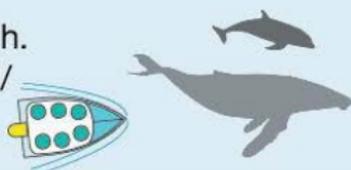
Don't travel faster than idle or 'no wake' speed within 300 metres



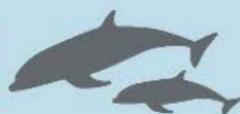
No more than 3 vessels within 300 metres



Do not obstruct their path.
Approach from a parallel/
slightly rear direction



Do not swim with
dolphin pods
containing juveniles



Stay 50 metres away from any
whale or orca



Stay 200 metres away from any
baleen/sperm whale with a calf



Do not swim with
whales or orca



For full text of the regulations please
visit: www.legislation.govt.nz

Some marine mammals you may encounter in the Bay of Islands

(Illustrations are not to scale)



- 1 New Zealand fur seal/kekeno
Arctocephalus forsteri
Male: 1.5–2.5 m
Female: 1.4–1.5 m



- 2 Common dolphin/aihe
Delphinus delphis
Male: 1.7–2 m
Female: 1.6–1.9 m



- 3 Long-finned pilot whale/upokohue
Giobicephala melas
Male: 4.1–6.3 m
Female: 3.1–4.3 m



- 4 Bryde's whale
Balaenoptera edeni
Male: 11.9–12 m
Female: 12–13 m



- 5 Bottlenose dolphin/terehe
Tursiops truncatus
Male: 2.4–3.8 m
Female: 2.4–3.6 m



- 6 Humpback whale/paikea
Megaptera novaeangliae
Male: 11–14 m
Female: 11–15 m



- 7 Orca (killer whale)/maki
Orcinus orca
Male: 5–8.2 m
Female: 4.6–7 m

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Permitted operators in Northland are:



Carino Dolphin and Sailing Adventures

Explore NZ

Fullers Great Sights Bay of Islands

Dive! Tutukaka Limited (Poor Knights area)

What is DOC doing to protect bottlenose dolphins in the Bay of Islands?

DOC is working with marine mammal tourism operators, iwi, scientists and the community to make changes to better protect the bottlenose dolphins in the Bay of Islands. In the future, local rules will change. The Department is looking in to creating new no-interaction areas will be implemented to give the dolphins a refuge where nobody is allowed approach them.

If you are interested in finding out more on how to work with others to protect the dolphins, please contact the Pewhairangi/Bay of Islands Office.

Harassment of marine mammals is against the law and offences can result in prosecution.

Call 09 4070300 (office hours) or 0800 DOCHOT (after hours) if you see a dolphin or other marine mammal being harassed in the Bay of Islands. Record incident details, take photos or footages to help the Department make the bay a better place for the dolphins.

DOC HOTline
0800 362 468

**Report any safety hazards
or conservation emergencies**
For Fire and Search and Rescue Call 111

For the Fire Service and Search and Rescue call 111.