



**RISSE'S DOLPHIN**

# RISSO'S DOLPHIN *(Grampus griseus)*

**ORDEN:** Cetacea.

**FAMILY:** Delphinides.

## **DISTINGUISHING FEATURES:**

Light grey, multiple scarring and white gashes.  
Dark scythe-shaped dorsal fin, almost 50 cm high.  
Round head without a rostrum.  
Rib between forehead and lip.  
Round and very dark eyes.

**SIZE:** 3 - 4 meters long.

**WEIGHT:** 400 kg on average.

**LIFE EXPECTANCY:** 30 years.

**SOCIAL LIFE:** Risso's Dolphin travels in pods generally of 10 to 50 individual and up to 100 individuals.

**AGE OF SEXUAL MATURITY:** 10-13 years.

## **REPRODUCTION:**

Mostly in the summer.

The gestation period is of 13 months.

**BIRTH:** One calf every two or four years.

**FEEDING:** Different species of squid and small fry.

**HABITAT:** Often near banks; more rarely at sea from local coast.

**RANGE:** Generally found in cold temperate and tropical worldwide.

**Predators:** Man.

**Threats:** Unintentional fishing, overfishing, plastic pollution, metal (ingestion).

**Status:** Minor concern\*.

Protected species.

## **TRIVIA**

**Where do the white marks on the body of Risso's Dolphin come from?**

**Answer:** Those scars seem to be the result of interactions between individuals (games, fighting). They indicate that individuals develop closely with each other. The Risso's Dolphin's surface layer of the skin does not regenerate. When it is scarred, a permanent white under-layer shows.

That is why older individuals can be almost white.

\* The IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) has established based on data on species a conservation status which ranges from 'minor concern' to 'extinct'





## **THE SPERM WHALE**

# THE SPERM WHALE (*Physeter macrocephalus*)

**ORDEN:** Cetacea.

**FAMILY:** Physesterides.

## **DISTINGUISHING FEATURES:**

Dark, grey, sometimes brown.

Light-coloured areas near the jaws and spots on the belly.

Stocky and massive build.

Often covered with marks and scars.

A massive head and a square profile.

Single blowhole on the front left of the head.

Split triangular tail.

**SIZE:** It is the largest toothed cetacean: between 15 to 18 meters on average.

**WEIGHT:** 35/40 tonnes for males, 10/15 tonnes for female.

**LIFE EXPECTANCY:** 50 to 70 years.

**SOCIAL LIFE:** Females live in pods of 10 to 50 individuals with their young and calves in rather warm and temperate waters whereas males are solitary and migrate to food-rich polar waters. The latter join a group only during the mating season.

**AGE OF SEXUAL MATURITY:** Roughly 10 years old.

**REPRODUCTION:** From January till June. 15-month gestation.

Violent fights between males take place before this period.

The winner is entitled to several females.

**BIRTH:** A calf every 3 to 5 years.

**FEEDING:** Mainly octopus and squid, but also seals and sharks.

**HABITAT:** Near the continental canyon. However, it may be spotted out at sea or in territorial waters.

**LOCATION:** All seas around the world except the North and South poles.

**PREDATORS:** Mainly parasites. The proliferation of invertebrates in the auditory canal changes how the sonar works: the animal becomes incapable of feeding itself, of finding its way and of avoiding depths.

**THREATS:** Fishing, pollution, parasites.

**STATUS:** Endangered species.

Protected species.

## **TRIVIA**

**How fast does a sperm whale swim on the surface?**

**Answer:** 5km/h that is the speed of a human adult walking. However, it may travel as fast as 14 km/h for one year that is the speed of a good runner.

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**F**

**HUMPBACK' WHALE**

# HUMPBACK' WHALE (*Megaptera novaeangliae*)

**ORDEN:** Cetacea.

**FAMILY:** Baleinopterides.

## **DISTINGUISHING FEATURES:**

A humpback at the stem of the dorsal finl.

White pectoral fins with balck spots 4 to 6 meters long.

Serrated Pectoral fin.

Furrow from head to belly.

Multiples bumps (tubercles) on the rostrum (extension from the head).

**SIZE:** Between 11and 17.5m.

**WEIGHT:** From 25 to 35 tons - that is the weight of 25 cars!

**LIFE EXPECTANCY:** 50 years.

**SOCIAL LIFE:** In feeding areas the humpback whale may be alone, in small groups or sometimes in herds of over 200 individuals.

In mating areas, the mother and the calf are often trailed by a male called an 'escort'.

**AGE OF SEXUAL MATURITY:** 4 years.

**REPRODUCTION:** Between December and April in the Northern Hemisphere, between June and September in the southern Hemisphere.

Gestation period is one month.

**BIRTH:** A calf every 2 or 3 years.

**FEEDING:** Planktonic crustaceans and small fry (herrings, capelins, sand eel).

**HABITAT:** At sea and coastal waters, equally in cold waters – in the summer- as in warm waters – in the winter.

**LOCATION:** All seas of the world.

**PREDATORS:** Killer whale, shark – mostly attacks the younger ones, man.

**THREATS:** Plastic pollution (ingestion, choking, entanglement), overfishing, chemical pollution, depletion of food resources.

**STATUS:** Minor concern, protected species.

## **TRIVIA**

**How much does a whale calf weigh at birth?**

**Answer:** It weighs 700 kg and is roughly 4 meters long!

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**E**

**THE EUROPEAN HERRING GULL**

# THE EUROPEAN HERRING GULL (*Larus argentatus*)

**ORDEN:** Charadriiformes.

**FAMILY:** Larides.

## **DISTINGUISHING FEATURES:**

Head, breast, belly and tail are white.

Light grey back and wings in clear contrast with the black quills.

The wingtips are black with white spots.

Yellow bill with a little red spot on the lower jaw.

Grey-pink coloured pink.

**SIZE:** 67 cm.

**WINGSPAN:** 135 to 145 cm.

**WEIGHT:** 750g to 1250g.

**LIFE EXPECTANCY:** 32 years.

## **SOCIAL LIFE:**

Sociable in all seasons.

Nesting as well seeking food in rubbish tips leads to large gatherings.

**AGE OF SEXUAL MATURITY:** 4 years.

**REPRODUCTION:** Monogamous and faithful species.

Couples get together round lid-march for life.

**BIRTH:** 3 eggs brooded by the female for one month.

**FEEDING:** An omnivorous and opportunistic species, the gull eats everything: mollusc, crustaceans, worms, fish, star fish, small mammals, small birds, amphibians or bird eggs – including those of their species!

**HABITAT:** Small rocky islands off the coast, cliffs, wet land, beaches, dunes and buildings.

Outside the nesting season, it may be seen anywhere with a preference for coastal areas neat large water strips and not far from rubbish tips.

**LOCATION:** All seas of the world.

**PREDATORS:** Mammals, snakes, owls.

**THREATS:** Collisions (avian, off-shore wind turbines), plastic pollution (ingestion) , oil spills.

**STATUS:** Minor concern, protected species.

## **TRIVIA**

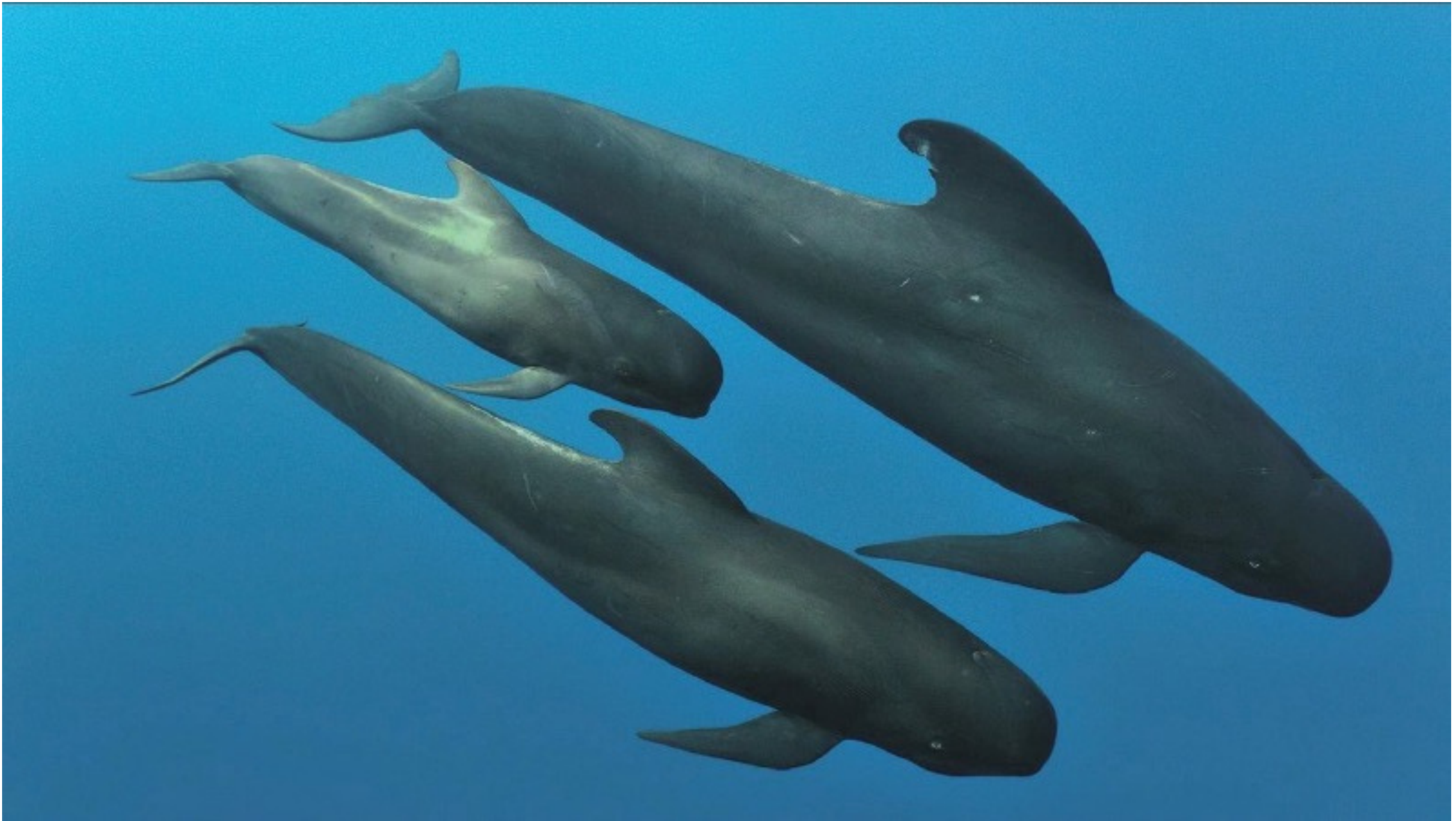
**How does a herring gull reach its prey when it is in a shell too hard for its bill?**

**Answer:** It drops it onto a rock or stone embankment below from up to a 20 m height!

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**B**

**LONG FINNED PILOT WHALE**

# LONG FINNED PILOT WHALE *(Globicephala melas)*

**ORDEN:** Cetacea.

**FAMILY:** Delphinides.

## **DISTINGUISHING FEATURES:**

Blackskin, sometimes with brown tint.

Specific large melon-shaped head.

Saddle-shaped dark grey spot behind the dorsal fin.

Diagonal grey or white stripes behind the eye.

Dorsal fin almost twice as long as it is high.

Very long and narrow Scythe-shaped pectoral fins.

Anchor shaped white mark stretching from the throat to the genital area.

**SIZE:** Between 5 and 6 meters.

**WINGSPAN:** 1,5 to 3,5 tons for males and 1 to 2.5 tons for females.

**WEIGHT:** 40 to 50 years for males and 60 to 70 years for females.

**LIFE EXPECTANCY:** 32 years.

## **SOCIAL LIFE:**

Extremely sociable, the pilot whale lives in family groups made up on average of 6 to 20 individuals.

They part only when they travel or hunt.

These groups often meet each other and form a group of several dozen individuals.

**REPRODUCTION:** Monogamous and faithful species. Cou for life.

**BIRTH:** One calf every 3 to 5 years – up to 10 in a female's lifespan.

**FEEDING:** The pilot whale is essentially teutophagic i.e. it feeds on cephalopod – octopus, calamari. In need, it may at a variety of species of fish – cod in the Atlantic, herring, mackerel, jack mackerel. Depending on the size, gender and the time of the year, it is estimated that the daily ration required for each individual is between 30 and 100 kg.

**HABITAT:** In coastal waters as well as in deep sea waters. It could travel depending on the abundance of prey.

**LOCATION:** Mediterranean Sea, cold Atlantic waters and Indo-Pacific.

**PREDATORS:** Orcas and sharks.

**THREATS:** Pollution, hunting, entanglement in floating nets.

**STATUS:** Insufficient data does not allow establishing the state of preservation\*.

Protected species.

## **TRIVIA**

**How special is the mother pilot whale to feed her offsprings?**

**Answer:** Its mammary gland are internal, the young pilot whale needs to gently tap its mother's belly so she may bring it out. The calf can suckle while swimming.

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**A**

**ORCA**

# ORCA

(*Orcinus Orca*)

**ORDEN:** Cetacea.

**FAMILY:** Delphinides.

## **DISTINGUISHING FEATURES:**

Round body.

Black body.

White eye stain.

Greyish saddle behind the dorsal fin.

Body, lower tail and some of the flanks are white.

Very large dorsal fin among males (up to 2 meters).

Much smaller and curved dorsal fin among females (0,90 cm).

**SIZE:** From 7 to 10 metres.

**WEIGHT:** From 4 to 8 tonnes.

**LIFE EXPECTANCY:** 50 years on average for females, 30 years for males.

**SOCIAL LIFE:** Live in groups of 5 to 20 individuals.

**REPRODUCTION:** The mating season is not defined accurately.

Gestation lasts from 16 to 17 months.

The birthing period goes from the fall till spring.

Calves are weaned after two years but the mother-calf bond probably lasts all life.

**BIRTH:** A calf every 3 to 8 years.

**FEEDING:** It feeds on a large variety of prey from sea mammals to fish – including whaleshark! – to sea birds. As a result, it is the greatest carnivorous ocean animal.

**HABITAT:** All coastal temperate cold waters. It is also located along the ice pack of both poles.

**LOCATION:** Mediterranean Sea, cold Atlantic waters and Indo-Pacific.

**PREDATORS:** No natural predator.

**THREATS:** Possibly anthropogenic – theme park, reduction of food resources, pollutions, collisions with ships, entanglement in fishing equipment, by-catch.

**STATUS:** Insufficient data does not allow to establish the state of preservation.

Protected species.

## **TRIVIA**

**Where does its French name ‘epaulard’ come from?**

**Answer:** The origin of the name ‘epaulard’ stems from the sharp-looking dorsal fin, a term derived from *espaart* which means ‘sword’ in old French and from ‘épaule’ (shoulder in French).

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D

**BLACK-HEADED GULL**

# BLACK-HEADED GULL *(Chroicocephalus ridibundus)*

**ORDEN:** Charadriiformes.

**FAMILY:** Larides.

## **DISTINGUISHING FEATURES:**

Average sized bird, svelt.

Red-blackish beak, feet and fingers.

Dark Eyes.

White lower body with some pink on the chest.

White tail.

Brown hood during mating season.

**SIZE:** 35 to 45 cm.

**WINGSPAN:** 95 to 105 cm.

**WEIGHT:** About 300g.

**LIFE EXPECTANCY:** Up to 30 years.

**SOCIAL LIFE:** The black-headed gull is very sociable except during the mating season.

It feeds and sleeps in larges and may form colonies with terns.

**REPRODUCTION:** Monogamous and faithful, it returns to the site of its nest every year Mating occurs mid-March.

**BIRTH:** 4 eggs hatched in turns by the female and the male.

**FEEDING:** Opportunistic and omnivorous, it is a true 'cleaner' of cities and beaches.

Ploughed fields and oceans are its larder.

It may feed while walking, swimming or diving.

**HABITAT:** Edge of swamps, ponds and lakes as well as clearings in boreal forest areas during the mating season.

It spends winter in varied coastal habitats: from coastal waters to ports, salt marshes and estuaries. In cities, it is found in city parks not far from water.

**NID:** A simple hollow stuffed with plant debris in sand dunes or low vegetation in wet areas or in 25 to 30 cm hills with a 10 cm section.

**LOCATION:** All over the world.

**PREDATORS:** Many mammals – foxes, stone marten, weasel, stray dogs, cats etc. –as well as birds of prey, short-eared and crows.

**THREATS:** Diseases, oil spills, raids on eggs, flooded nests, chemical pollution, and plastic pollution.

**STATUS:** Minor concern\*.

Protected species.

## **TRIVIA**

**How does the male black-headed gull express it wishes to mate with a particular female?**

**Answer:** It regurgitates food for its ladylove. If it is accepted mating may take place.

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