

Do You Remember SWiMMS?

YOU, divers, boaters, sailors, as sea lovers, I am sure you already heard about SWiMMS or The Singapore Wild Marine Mammal Survey which started two and half years ago. The Dolphin Study Group undertook this project at the National University of Singapore, and we need your help to increase our dolphin sighting database.

The SWiMMS project will run far quicker with your help, and we have prepared a form in order to collect your sighting reports. You can contribute to that project by watching the sea; behind the waves could be a hidden dolphin or even a peacefully breathing dugong! As soon as you spot one of these elusive animals, fill up a sighting form with the basic information: the species, the numbers of animals, the date, the time, the location, simple behaviors. Then send it back to us.

You don't need to be a naturalist to take part in SWiMMS. You can be my eyes while at sea, and I will give you several clues to make your work easier!

The most difficult part of the job is to determine the right species.

The **dugong** is quite easy to distinguish from the other marine mammals: its physical appearance — except the fluke-like tail — is completely different from dolphin! It is a big, brownish, slowly moving creature, with a bulbous face and a spindle-shaped body.

For **dolphins**, the job is a little harder. We have four main dolphin species in Singapore and local waters, so you need to know how to tell them apart. Have a quick look at the colour, the beak and the dorsal fin: three field markings which will make you a good dolphin watcher!

The four dolphin species I am presenting here are the **Bottlenose** dolphin — the world famous dolphin species, the **Humpback** dolphin and our two main species, the **Irrawaddy** dolphin and the **Finless** porpoise.

Regarding the color, beak and dorsal fin features the possibilities are as follow:

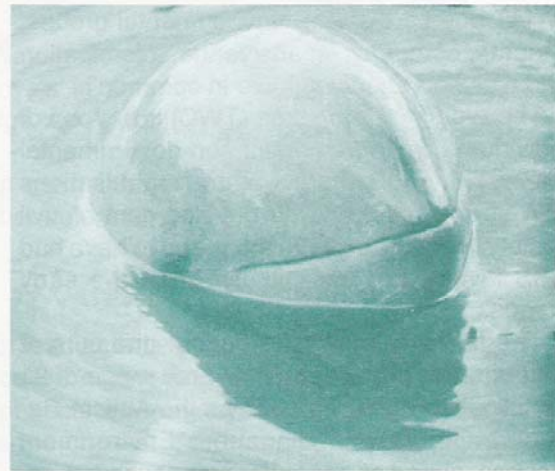
Colour: dark gray or ivory white to pink

Beak: yes or no (present or not)

Dorsal fin: yes or no (present or not)

Any one feature will always make the difference from a species to another:

- The Bottlenose dolphin has a dark gray body, with both a beak and a dorsal fin.



IRRAWADDY DOLPHIN

- The Humpback dolphin is the most common, is white or pinkish, with a beak and a dorsal fin.
- The Irrawaddy dolphin and Finless porpoise are dark gray animals. The one, without beak, but with a small dorsal fin is the Irrawaddy, and the small one without both a dorsal fin and a beak is a Finless porpoise.

You will realise that the identification work requires a little of habit and training. Start as soon as possible and you will rapidly become one of my best dolphin-watchers!

May I just add few words to definitely improve your behaviour with the dolphins? Don't shout, don't feed them (this is a bad habit, they may become dependent on humans: keep in mind they are wild dolphins) and don't rush at them.

Feel free to contact me at my address below to receive the sighting forms and to get more details related to marine mammals in Singapore waters!

The sighting form has been distributed to most diving clubs and diving shops, and it is also available from our website. For more information, contact:

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