Short ID sheet whales and dolphins Dutch Caribbean

Most common species:

- Humpback whale – *Megaptera novaeangliae* - bultrug
- Fin whale – *Balaenoptera physalus* – gewone vinvis
- Minke whale – *Balaenoptera acutorostrata* - dwergvinvis
- Sperm whale – *Physeter macrocephalus* - potvis
- Short-finned pilot whale – *Globicephala macrorhynchus* – tropische griend
- Bottlenose dolphin – *Tursiops truncatus* - tuimelaar
- Spinner dolphin – *Stenella longirostris* – spinner dolfijn
- Clymene dolphin – *Stenella clymene* – gehelmde dolfijn
- Common dolphin – *Delphinus delphis* – gewone dolfijn
- Atlantic spotted dolphin – *Stenella frontalis* – Atlantische gevlekte dolfijn
- Pantropical spotted dolphin – *Stenella attenuata* – pan-tropische gevlekte dolfijn

What to note during a sighting:

- Position
- Species (if known)
- Group size
- Date and time

Topography of a dolphin:

More info: Meike Scheidat meike.scheidat@wur.nl; Steve Geelhoed steve.geelhoed@wur.nl

Pictures were kindly provided by Marijke de Boer, Xana Teixeira, Lonneke IJsseldijk & Caroline Weir. © 2012

The production of this ID sheet was funded by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs (project BO-11-011.05-005)
Humpback Whale – *Megaptera novaeangliae*

large whale, mostly solitary or in pairs (mother-calf)
Length: ca. 16 m

- tail flukes serrated edge, varying black and white pattern on underside

- extremely long flippers (ca. 4m)

- blow rounded and bushy, still visible when dorsal fin emerges
- small bump before the small dorsal fin
- tubercles on head and lower jaw
**Fin Whale *Balaenoptera physalus***

- large whale; length: ~24m
  - right lower jaw white, V-shaped pattern (chevron) behind head
  - tall, columnar blow, blowhole surface briefly before dorsal fin emerges
    - rarely shows tail before diving
    - sharp dorsal fin, often pointed or falcate
  - colouration: dark grey above, white/cream below

---

**Minke Whale *Balaenoptera acutorostrata***

- small size whale; length: 9-11m
  - sharply pointed snout; sharp ridge on the snout
    - V shaped head when seen from above
  - falcate dorsal fin, appears simultaneously with the blowholes during surfacing
    - inconspicuous or no blow
    - white band on flippers
  - no fluke up when diving, often arches the back
  - colouration: black/dark grey above; grey chevron behind head; white underside
Sperm Whale *Physeter macrocephalus*

- large whale; **length: 18m (male); 11m (female)**
  - typically solitary or small groups; **normally in offshore deep water**

  - **single blowhole on left side of head, bushy blow angles forward and left from front of head**
    - huge bumpy head; **low dorsal fin without bump in front**
    - wrinkled skin (like a plum), ridge on back with bumps
      - triangular flukes lifted high at start of dive

Short-finned pilot whale *Globicephala macrorhynchus*

- small sized whale, **length: 7m (male), 5m (female)**
  - typically in groups of more than 10; normally in deep water

  - exaggerated and **bulbous melon head**, with beak barely discernible or non-existent; robust body, with a deep tail stock.
  - **dorsal fin is wide**, broad- based, falcate and set well forward on the body
    - the **flippers are long**, slender, and sickle-shaped
      - overall coloration dark (grey)
    - but a faint grey “**saddle patch**” may be visible behind the dorsal fin
**Bottlenose dolphin *Tursiops truncatus***

- medium-sized to large dolphin, length: 2.5 to 4m
  - typically groups: 10 or more (also bow riding but less often than spinner)

- **robust body**
  - short to medium-length *“stubby” beak*
  - **distinct forehead above beak**
  - large falcate dorsal fin

**Spinner dolphin *Stenella longirostris***

- small to medium sized dolphin, length: 1.30m to 2.30m
  - typically groups of 10 or more (also bow riding)
  - they can be seen **spinning** high in the air

- **slender body** with an extremely *long and thin beak*
  - on top **dark grey cape**, light grey on the sides and white on the belly
  - a dark band runs from the eye to the flipper, bordered above by a thin light line
  - the beak is tipped with black or grey
  - the dorsal fin is basically triangular, slightly falcate to erect or canted forward
Clymene dolphin (*Stenella clymene*)

- small but **rather stocky** and has a moderately long beak.
- dorsal fin is tall and nearly triangular to slightly falcate
  - white belly, light grey flanks and dark grey cape
- **black ”moustache”** marking of variable extent at the top of the beak.
- colouration similar to spinner dolphin, looks vaguely like a grey Common dolphin

Common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*)

- slender body with a **long beak** sharply demarcated from the melon
- the dorsal fin is high and moderately curved backwards, often with pale centre
  - unique (hourglass) pattern with a **pale yellow patch** on the side
Atlantic spotted dolphin (*Stenella frontalis*)

small dolphin, length: 1.7 to 2.3m
- often in groups of animals with different ages

- overall impression of a small (spotted) Bottlenose dolphin
- moderately long, **stocky beak**, with a distinctive forehead above the beak
- the **dorsal fin is tall and falcate** and the flippers are curved backwards
  - juveniles are unspotted, older individuals acquire spots
  - very similar to the other dolphins occurring here
- **colouration three-toned**: dark upperside, lighter grey middle part and whitish underparts

---

Pantropical spotted dolphin (*Stenella attenuata*)

small dolphin, length: 1.6 to 2.6m

- **long beak** sharply demarcated from the melon, slender body, strongly backward curved fin and spotted body
  - the ventral spots fuse and fade to a medium grey
  - tip of the beak is white
- details of coloration and spot intensity vary regionally
- juveniles are unspotted, older individuals acquire spots
- very similar to the Atlantic spotted dolphin and other dolphins occurring here
- **colouration two-toned**: dark upperside, light underside
  - **black** moustache