

Name: _____

Dolphins and Porpoises

By Guy Belleranti

Porpoises and dolphins are fascinating and beautiful sea creatures. They are in the group of whales called toothed whales.

Many people think dolphins and porpoises are fish, but this is simply not true. They are mammals, just like dogs, cats, horses, cows, deer, and humans. Like all mammals, dolphins and porpoises are warm-blooded, which means their body temperature always stays the same. While most other animals are born from eggs, mammals are born alive. Also, mammals have lungs and breathe air. Dolphins and porpoises need to come up to the surface of the water to breathe through the blowhole in the top of their heads.

Most porpoises and dolphins eat fish, squid, and crustaceans. However, the largest species of dolphin, the orca, also hunts seals, penguins, walruses, and whales.

Both porpoises and dolphins use echolocation. This means they send out sounds and then listen for the echoes bouncing back. Echolocation helps them find food and escape predators.

Both porpoises and dolphins are toothed whales. However, porpoise teeth are shaped differently than dolphin teeth. Dolphins have sharp, cone-shaped teeth, but porpoise teeth are spade-shaped and flatter.



A dolphin is a social animal with a pointed beak.

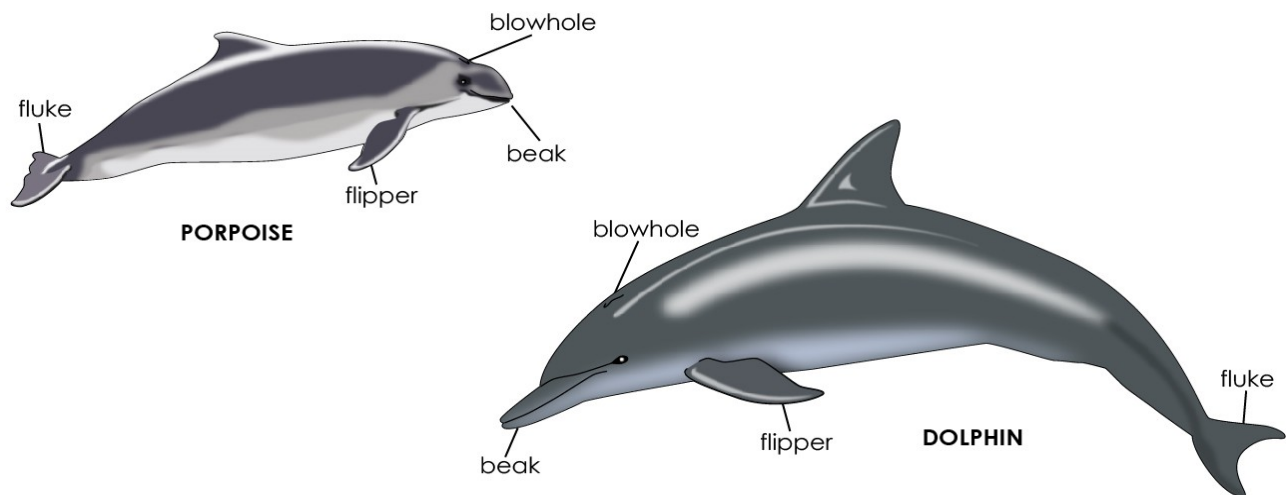


A porpoise is small and more shy than a dolphin. It has a rounded snout.

Their bodies are shaped differently, too. Porpoises are shorter with more rounded beaks and bodies. The dorsal fins on their backs are also shorter and less pointed. Dolphins, on the other hand, have longer, more pointed beaks. Their dorsal fins are taller and more pointed too.

Porpoises are usually under seven feet (two meters) long. Many dolphins are over ten feet (three meters). Orcas can grow over twenty feet (six meters) long.

The life span of a dolphin is usually much longer than the life span of a porpoise. Dolphins can live 50 or more years. Porpoises seldom live longer than 15 years.



Dolphins are very social animals. They live in large groups called pods, with up to a dozen individuals. Dolphins enjoy interacting with humans. Sometimes they swim beside boats and make whistling and chirping sounds as they talk. Porpoises are much more shy than dolphins, and they tend to avoid human interaction. They usually live in smaller pods of 2 to 4 individuals. Their sounds can't be heard by our ears.



About the Author

Guy Belleranti works as a docent at Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from his experiences working with wild animals and teaching others.

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1. List three ways mentioned in the article that dolphins and porpoises are alike.

- _____
- _____
- _____

2. What is the largest species of dolphin? _____

3. What is the author's purpose for writing this passage?

- a. to persuade readers to watch for dolphins and porpoises when they visit the ocean
- b. to entertain readers with a funny story about dolphins and porpoises
- c. to teach readers the similarities and differences between dolphins and porpoises
- d. to inform readers that dolphins and porpoises are endangered species

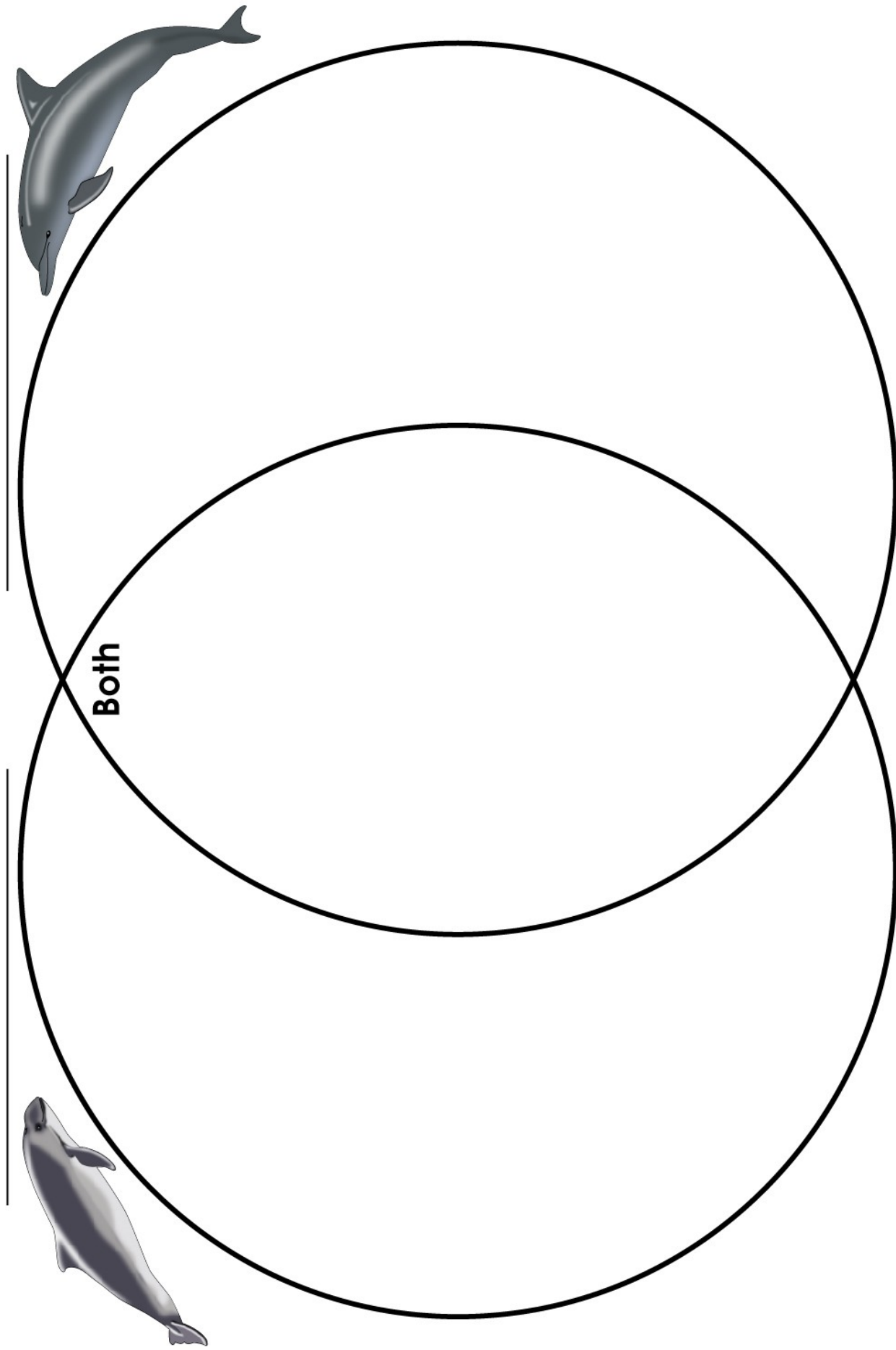
4. Both dolphins and porpoises...

- a. are gray fish found in the Atlantic Ocean
- b. live in large pods of 12 or more
- c. have the same type of teeth
- d. are types of whales

5. Explain the differences between a dolphin's dorsal fin and a porpoise's dorsal fin.

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Venn Diagram



Cut out the characteristics of dolphins and porpoises. Glue them on the Venn diagram.

about 10 feet (3 meters) long	breathe air	more social
shorter, rounder dorsal fin	mammals	cone-shaped teeth
use echolocation	lives less than 15 years	about 7 feet (2 meters) long
more shy	lives in pods	lives about 50 years
spade-shaped teeth	taller, pointed dorsal fin	warm-blooded

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The scrambled words below are vocabulary words from the article. Unscramble each word and write it on the line.



Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.

1. _____

a k b e

hint: snout that sticks out of an animal's face

2. _____

a t u r p e r t e e m

hint: measure of heat

3. _____

i q u s d

hint: fast-swimming sea animal with ten arms or tentacles

4. _____

i n g r p c h i

hint: making a short, high-pitched sound

5. _____

o l w h b e l o

hint: part of a whale used for breathing air life

6. _____

s i n p e n g u

hint: flightless birds that live in Antarctica

7. _____

a p e e s c

hint: break free from; run away from

ANSWER KEY



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1. List three ways mentioned in the article that dolphins and porpoises are alike.

Accept any 3:

both are mammals

both breathe air

both warm-blooded

both born alive

both use echolocation

both have blowholes

both are whales

both have teeth

both live in pods

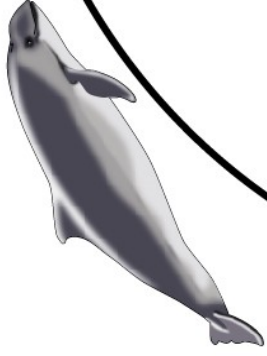
both eat fish, squid, and crustaceans

2. What is the largest species of dolphin? orca
3. What is the author's purpose for writing this passage? c
- a. to persuade readers to watch for dolphins and porpoises when they visit the ocean
 - b. to entertain readers with a funny story about dolphins and porpoises
 - c. to teach readers the similarities and differences between dolphins and porpoises
 - d. to inform readers that dolphins and porpoises are endangered species
4. Both dolphins and porpoises... d
- a. are gray fish found in the Atlantic Ocean
 - b. live in large pods of 12 or more
 - c. have the same type of teeth
 - d. are types of whales
5. Explain the differences between a dolphin's dorsal fin and a porpoise's dorsal fin.
- A dolphin's dorsal fin is taller and more pointed. A porpoise's dorsal fin is shorter and more rounded.

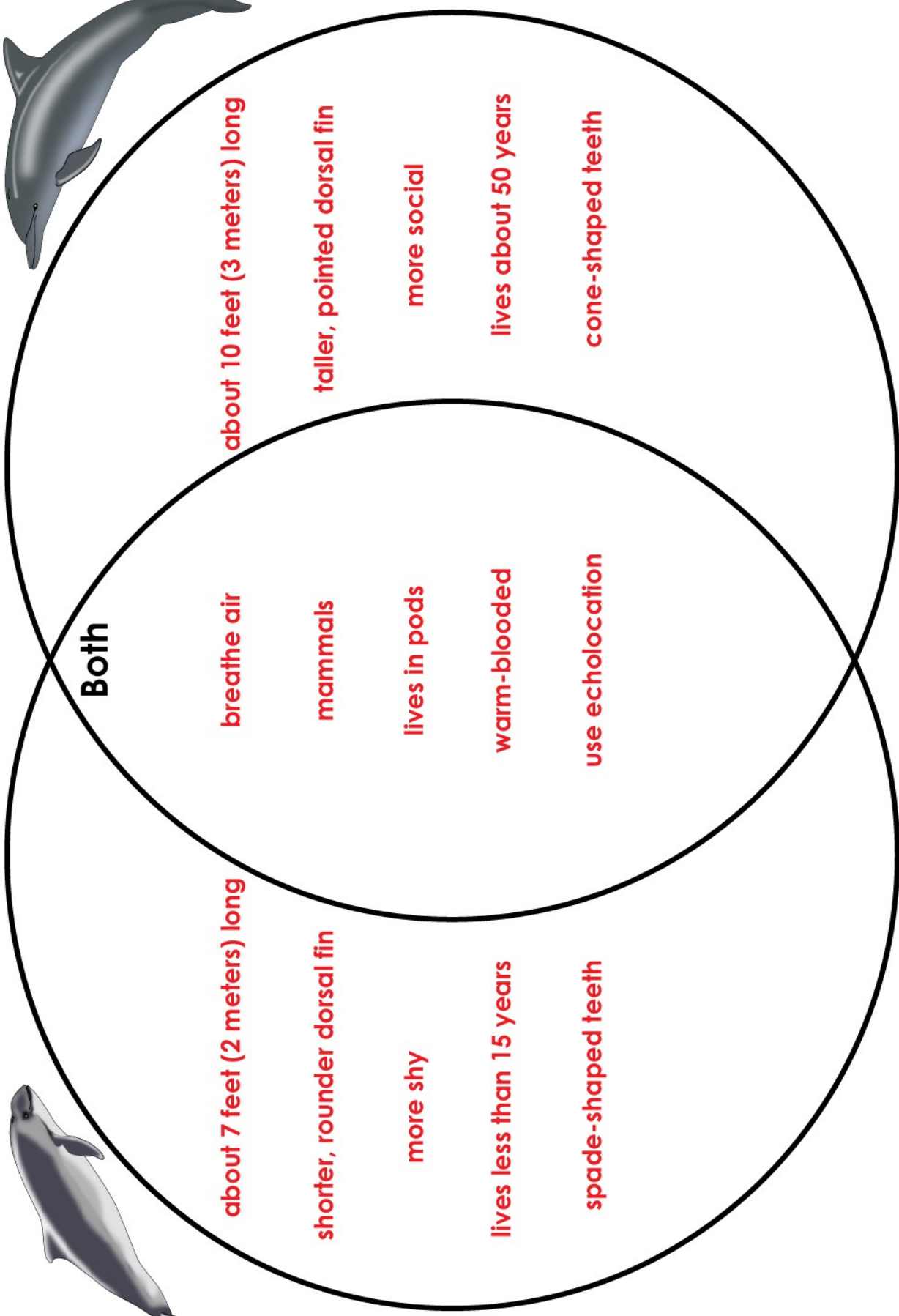
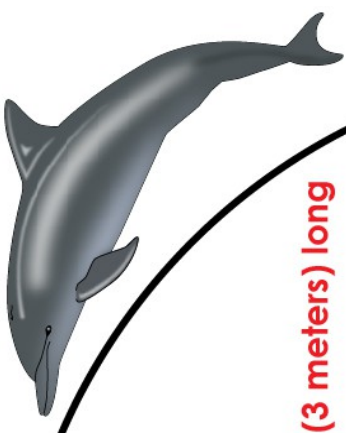
ANSWER KEY

Venn Diagram

PORPOISES



DOLPHINS



ANSWER KEY

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Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.



1. beak

a k b e

hint: snout that sticks out of an animal's face

2. temperature

a t u r p e r t e e m

hint: measure of heat

3. squid

i q u s d

hint: fast-swimming sea animal with ten arms or tentacles

4. chirping

i n g r p c h i

hint: making a short, high-pitched sound

5. blowhole

o l w h b e l o

hint: part of a whale used for breathing air life

6. penguins

s i n p e n g u

hint: flightless birds that live in Antarctica

7. escape

a p e e s c

hint: break free from; run away from