

Dolphins: Our Friends From The Sea

Objectives

- To teach about the biology and behaviors of dolphins.
- To illustrate an example of scientific study.
- To teach some basic ideas about ocean life.
- To use an engaging, familiar marine animal to instill appreciation of and respect for the ocean.

Synopsis

How are dolphins trained? How are they cared for? How do they live in the open ocean? As mammals, what are their physical characteristics? What does their language sound like? Do they communicate with one another? How do they hear under water? How do we capture them? Why do we capture them? What can we learn from them? The film provides answers to questions such as these and stimulates youngsters to ask many more.

Dolphins starts with a grand tour through an oceanarium while teaching about the biological differences between fish and mammals. Then as a group of dolphins perform an amazing synchronized leaps and other tricks, children learn how trainers use a combination of whistles and hand signals to communicate with these social mammals. Next, through animated sequences, the special characteristics of the mammal dolphin are shown-how they breathe, give birth to their young, feed and care for them, and what they eat. The dolphin use of echo-location is also explained in this animated segment.

Returning to live footage, the film documents the capture of two dolphins in the open ocean and shows the care they're given by divers as they become adjusted to people and later acclimated to their new surrounds in the oceanarium.

Questions to ask before viewing

- Has anyone ever seen a dolphin, on TV or live? Where did you see it? What was it like?
- Why do you think dolphins are called "our friends from the sea?"
- Raise your hand if you have fish for pets, or if you've ever seen a fishbowl with fish for pets. What do you think is most fun about fish as pets? Do you think dolphins would make good pets? Why?

Questions to ask after viewing

1. Is a dolphin a fish? (No.) What is it? (A mammal.)
2. Name some other mammals. (Dogs, cats, humans...) What are some ways mammals are alike? (They have milk glands for feeding their young; they must breathe air; they give birth to live babies.)
3. When dolphins perform, what do they get from their trainers for a job well done? (Praise-words of encouragement, reward-snacks of fish and affection-a hug or pat.) Do you think that method of training would work for other mammals? Why? Would it work for fish? Why not?
4. How do dolphins breathe? (Through a blowhole.)
5. What is a baby dolphin called? (Calf.) How long does a calf feed on its mother's milk? (18 months.) After about six months, the calf begins to learn to catch food. What makes up most of the dolphin's diet? (Fish and squid.)
6. A dolphin is a "social" animal. What does that mean? (They like to be around other dolphins.)
7. Dolphins live in large groups. What are these groups called? (Schools.) How many dolphins are usually in a school? (50 to 100, but sometimes as many as thousands have been seen together.)
8. Do dolphins have teeth? (Yes.) Many or few? (Many: 88 to 100.)
9. Who has better eyesight, dolphins or humans? (Dolphins.)
10. Dolphins have a very special way of hearing called echo-location. Describe how it works. (They send out sounds which echo, or bounce off, the objects and back to them. The dolphins' brains "read" the echoes to determine the size, shape and distance of an object.) What is the name given to this kind of echo-location? (Sonar.)
11. Why are dolphins called "ambassadors from the sea?" (They are friendly to humans.) How do you

think people can benefit from better understanding dolphins?

12. What precautions are taken when a dolphin is captured to keep it safe and comfortable? (The net has a long line so the dolphin can swim freely; divers gently help it into the boat using a special sling with holes for the flippers; its skin is kept wet to keep it cool and to keep it from getting sunburned; it is spoken to in gentle tones; it's given medical attention and shots to prevent disease before entering the oceanarium.)
13. What legend about dolphins did the film tell? (In Crete, it was believed that dolphins were pirates who had been changed into dolphins to make right the wrongs they had committed.)

Length

- 13 minutes

Subject Area

- Science

Audience Levels

- Kindergarten-6th grade

Catalog Number

- 9800

AIMS Multimedia
(818) 773-4300
(800) 367-2467
www.aimsmultimedia.com

AIMS
Discussion Guide

Dolphins: Our Friends From The Sea

