

The **Atlantic Spotted Dolphin** (*Stenella frontalis*) is a dolphin found in the Gulf Stream of the North Atlantic Ocean. Older members of the species have a very distinctive spotted coloration all over their body.

The Atlantic Spotted Dolphin was first identified by Cuvier in 1828. There is considerable variation in the physical form of individuals in the species and specialists have long been uncertain as to the correct taxonomic classification. Currently just one species is recognized, however, it is quite possible that a large, particularly spotty variant commonly found near Florida may be classified as a formal subspecies or indeed a species in its own right. The coloring of the Atlantic Spotted Dolphin varies enormously as they grow. Calves are a fairly uniform grey color. When the calves are weaned, they then begin to get their spots. Juveniles have some dark spots on their belly, and white spots of their flanks. Their back and dorsal fin are a darker grey than the rest of the body. As the animal matures the spots became denser and spread until the body appears black with white spots at full maturation.

The Atlantic Spotted Dolphin has a 3-part coloration:

Dark gray back, lighter sides, and a white belly.

Measurements at Birth:

Length: about 35"-43" (90-110 cm)

Weight: unavailable

Maximum Measurements:

Length:

Male 7'5" (2.26 m)

Female 7'6" (2.29 m)

Weight:

Male 310 lb. (140 kg)

Female 290 lb. (130 kg)

These dolphins are a middle sized dolphin in both length and weight. At full size South American Spotted Dolphins are about 2.2-2.5 m in length. Compared to their much smaller pantropical spotted dolphin, the Atlantic spotted dolphin is more robust. It lives in common waters with the pantropical spotted dolphin and the bottlenose dolphin.

In common with other species in its genus the Atlantic Spotted is a gregarious creature. It is a fast swimmer, keen bow-rider and prone to acrobatic aerial displays. The species is endemic to the temperate and tropical areas of the Atlantic Ocean. It has been widely observed in the western end of the Gulf Stream, between Florida and Bermuda. It is also present in the Gulf of Mexico. More infrequent sightings have been made further east, off the Azores and Canary Islands. Northerly sightings have been made as far north as Cape Cod across to the south-western tip of Spain. They are certainly present further south too as far as Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil and across to west Africa. However the distribution is poorly understood in these areas.

About 20 years ago, there were only about 80 dolphins in the Bahamas. Now, 20 years later, there are almost 200 dolphins there. On account of their similar appearance to other dolphins in their range it is difficult to be sure of the Atlantic Spotted Dolphin's population. A conservative estimate is around 100,000 individuals.