



PMMSN FIELD GUIDE

to the whales and dolphins of the Philippines

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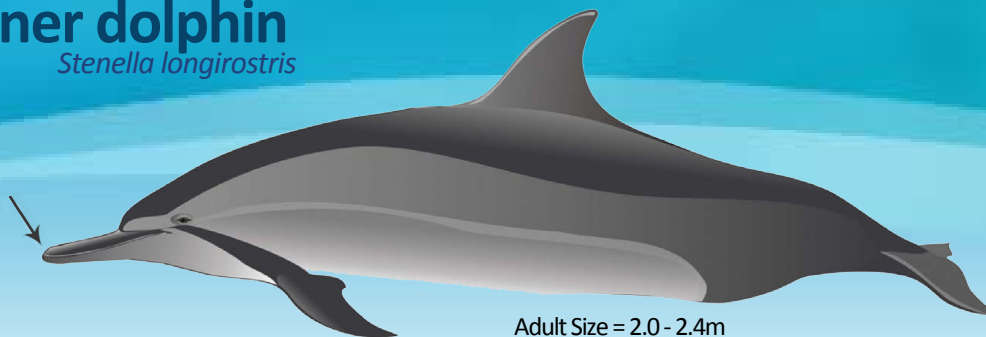
1st Edition

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Note: This field guide gives First Responders a quick reference in identifying stranded whales and dolphins, and is a supplementary material to the PMMSN Marine Mammal Stranding Response Manual. For more details on each species, please refer to the manual.

Spinner dolphin

Stenella longirostris



Adult Size = 2.0 - 2.4m

Key Features:

Long, narrow rostrum with white tip

Note: Very frequent strander

Often misidentified as Bottlenose dolphin

Pantropical spotted dolphin

Stenella attenuata



Adult Size = 2.2 - 2.7m

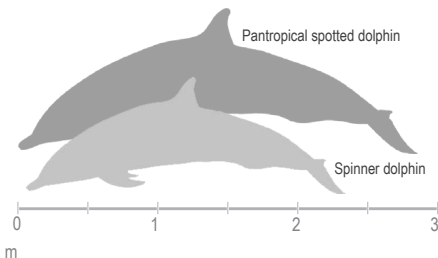
Key Features:

Has rostrum with white tip

Only adults have white spots

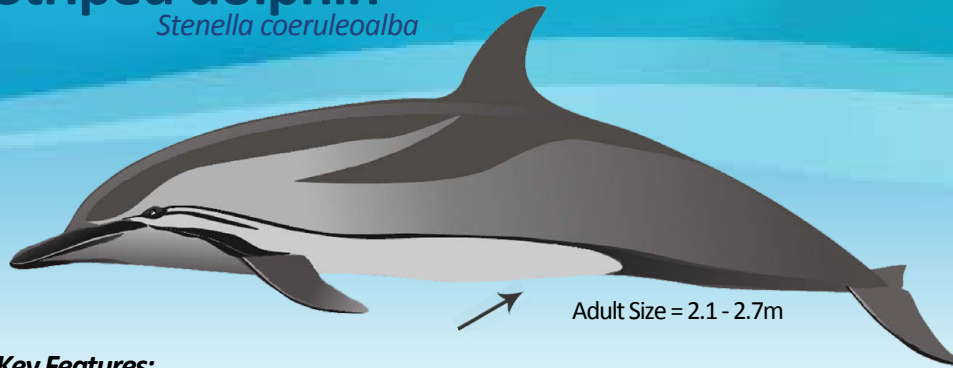
Note: Very frequent strander

Young may be mistaken as Spinner dolphin



Striped dolphin

Stenella coeruleoalba



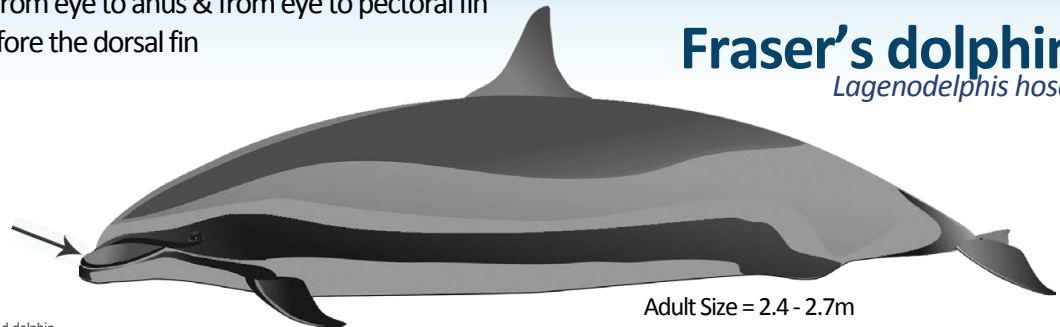
Key Features:

Bold, narrow, black stripes from eye to anus & from eye to pectoral fin
Grey cape with a “break” before the dorsal fin

Note: Rare strander

Fraser's dolphin

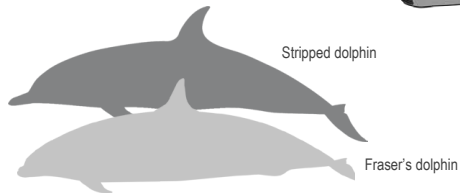
Lagenodelphis hosei



Key Features:

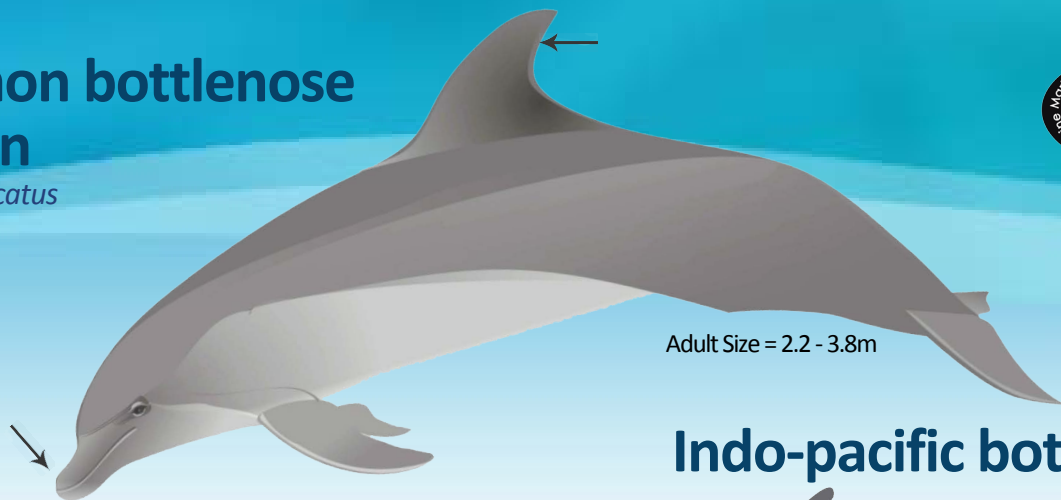
Very short rostrum, small triangular dorsal fin
Dark stripe running from face to anus

Note: Very frequent strander



Common bottlenose dolphin

Tursiops truncatus



Adult Size = 2.2 - 3.8m

Key Features:

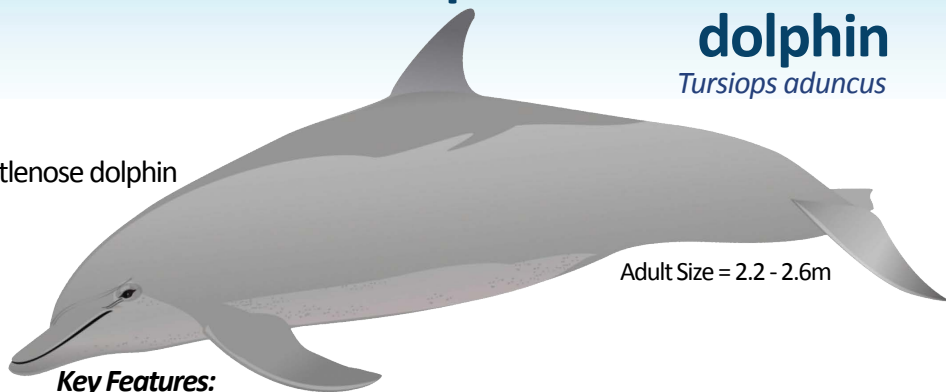
Large, falcate dorsal fin and short rostrum

Note: Very frequent strander

May be mistaken as an Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin

Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin

Tursiops aduncus



Adult Size = 2.2 - 2.6m

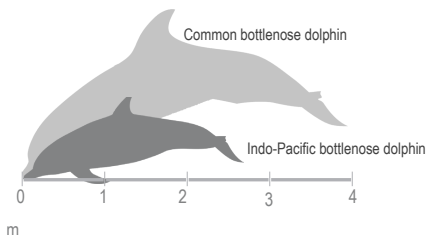
Key Features:

Adults have dark spots on its abdomen and sides

Note:

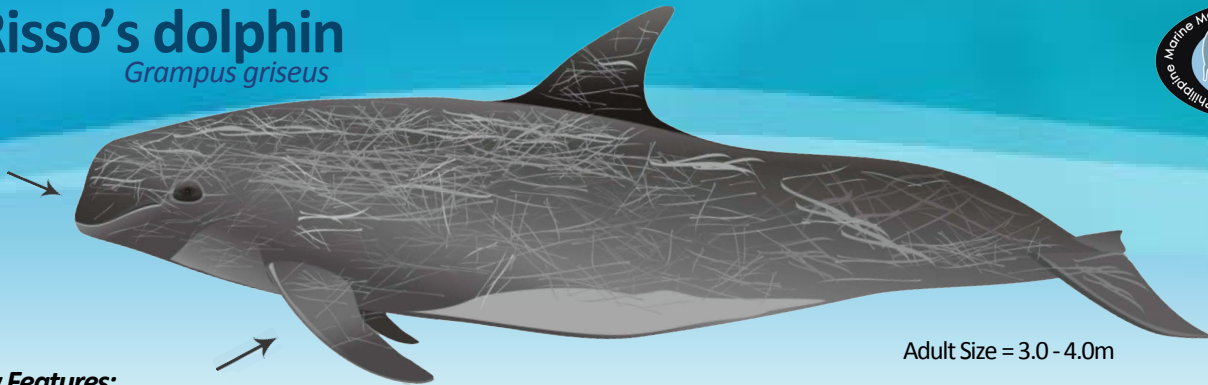
Frequent strander

Young may be mistaken as Common bottlenose dolphin
while adults may be mistaken as Pantropical spotted dolphin



Risso's dolphin

Grampus griseus

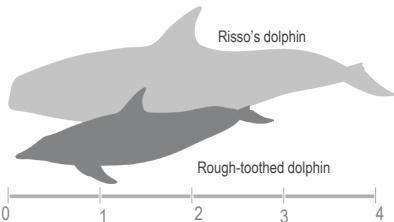


Adult Size = 3.0 - 4.0m

Key Features:

Extensive linear scars throughout body
 Young may have little or no scars while older animals are lighter in color due to overlapping scars
 Broad head and no rostrum
 Long pectoral and dorsal fins

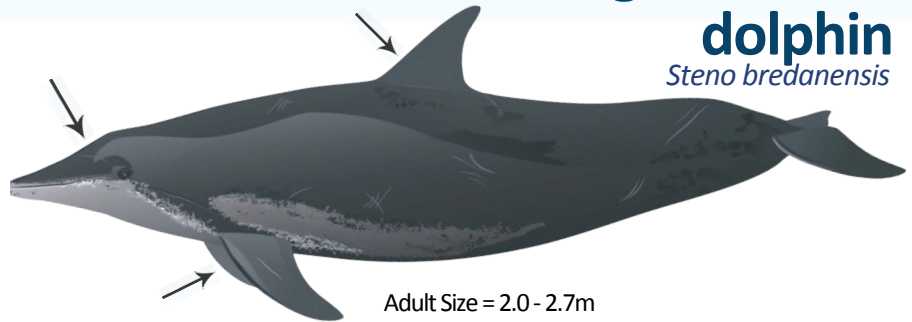
Note: Very frequent strander
 Young may be mistaken for a Pygmy killer whale or False killer whale



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Rough-toothed dolphin

Steno bredanensis



Adult Size = 2.0 - 2.7m

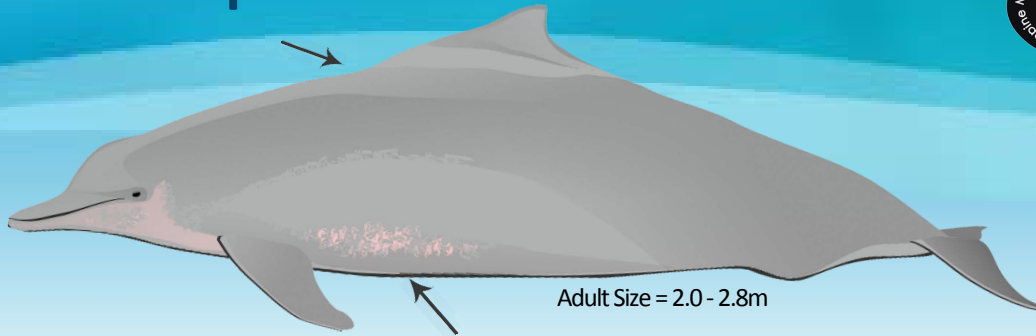
Key Features:

Long rostrum without a clear delineation between the melon and rostrum
 Large pectoral and dorsal fin

Note: Frequent strander

Indo-pacific humpback dolphin

Sousa chinensis



Key Features:

Pink with grey blotches

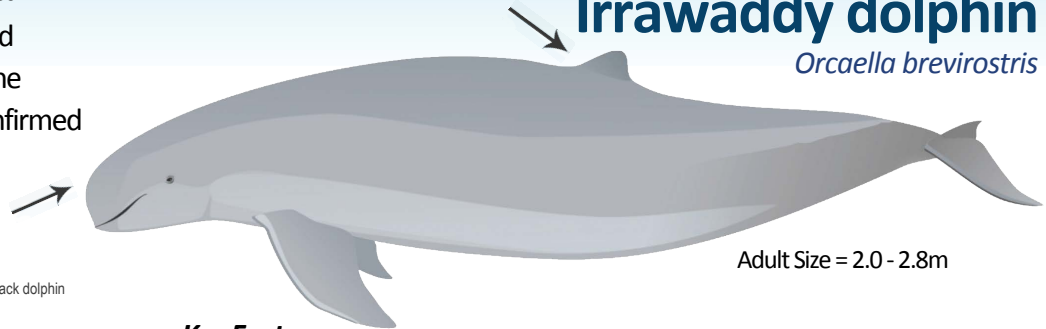
Hump at the base of its small dorsal fin

Note: No stranding incident record

Presence of this species in the Philippines has yet to be confirmed

Irrawaddy dolphin

Orcaella brevirostris

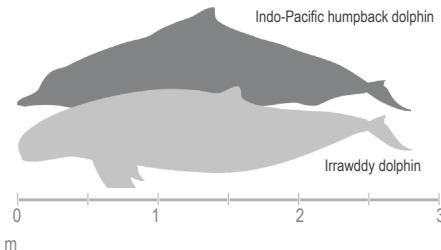


Key Features:

Small, triangular dorsal fin Head is rounded with no rostrum

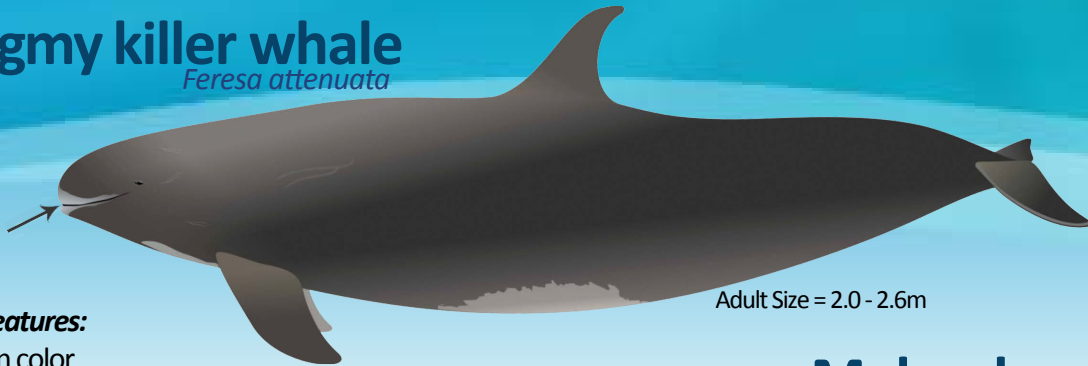
Note: Very rare strander

Known distribution so far are in Malampaya Sound in Palawan, Panay, Guimaras and Negros Occidental



Pygmy killer whale

Feresa attenuata



Adult Size = 2.0 - 2.6m

Key Features:

Black in color

Head is rounded with “white lips” and no rostrum

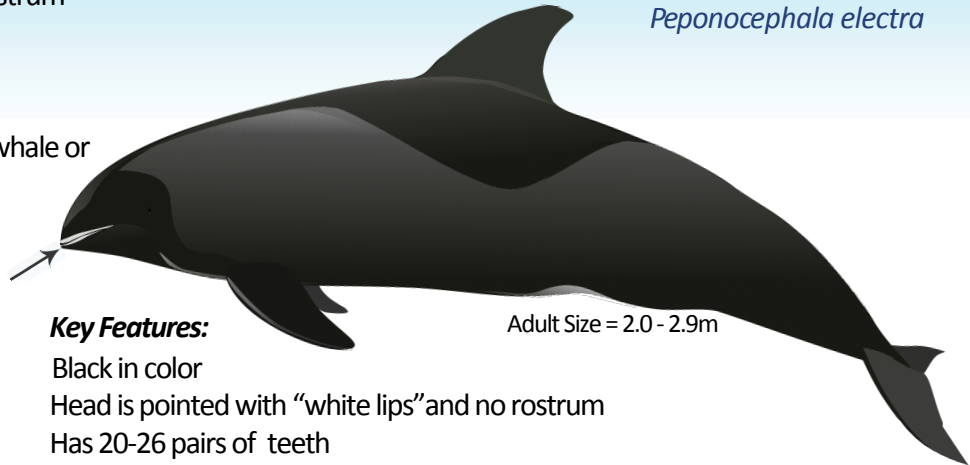
Has less than 15 pairs of teeth

Pectoral fins are tapered

Note: Very frequent strander
Often mistaken as Melon-headed whale or
False killer whale

Melon-headed whale

Peponocephala electra



Adult Size = 2.0 - 2.9m

Key Features:

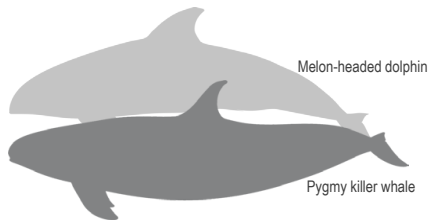
Black in color

Head is pointed with “white lips” and no rostrum

Has 20-26 pairs of teeth

Pectoral fins are pointed

Note: Very frequent strander
Often mistaken as Pygmy killer whale or False killer whale



False killer whale

Pseudorca crassidens



Key Features:

Black in color

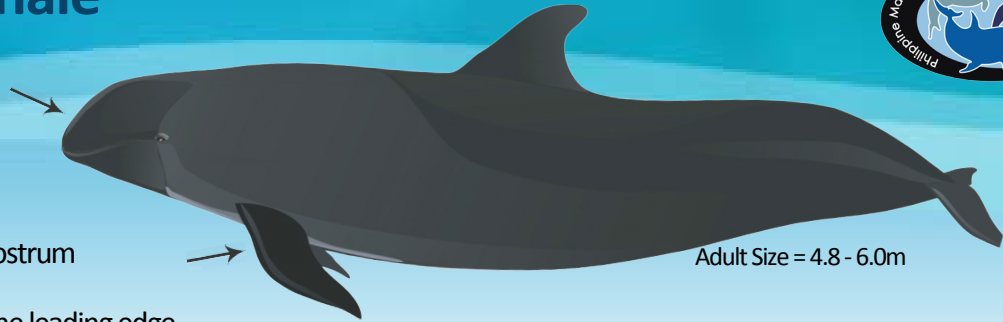
Head is rounded and has no rostrum

Has 7-12 pairs of teeth

Pectoral fin has a “hump” on the leading edge

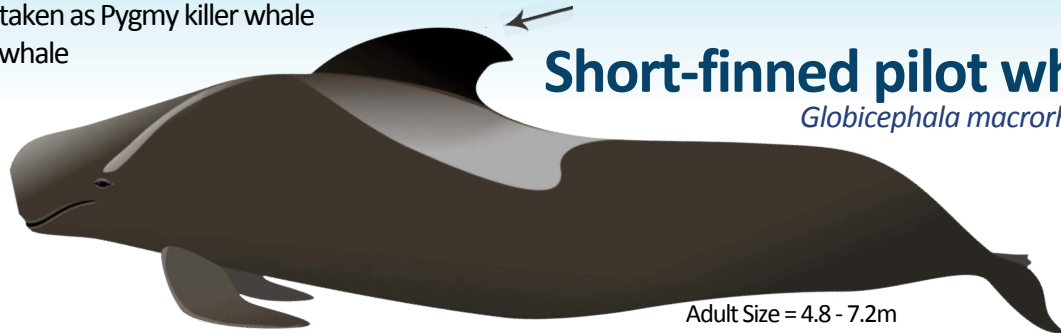
Note: Frequent strander

Young is often mistaken as Pygmy killer whale
or Melon-headed whale



Short-finned pilot whale

Globicephala macrorhynchus



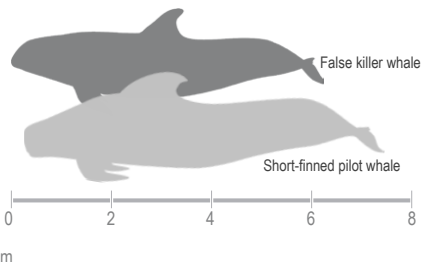
Key Features:

Black in color with broad head

Dorsal fin is falcate with broad base on the cranial half of the body

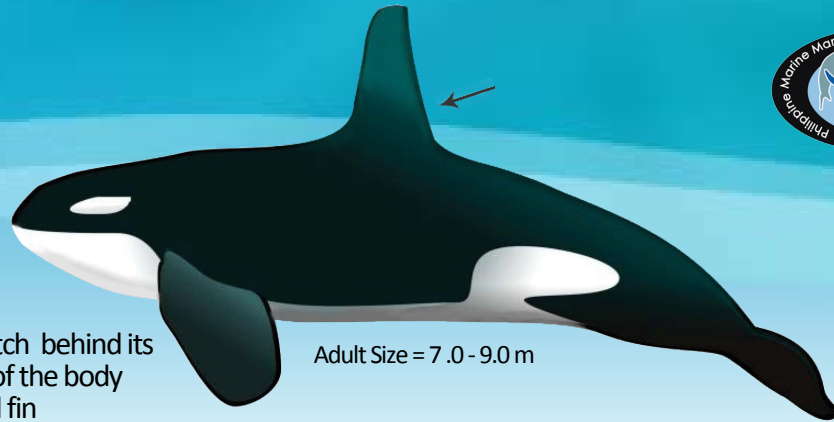
Has light grey “saddle-shaped” patch behind its dorsal fin and
streak behind its eye

Note: Very frequent strander



Killer whale

Orcinus orca



Key Features:

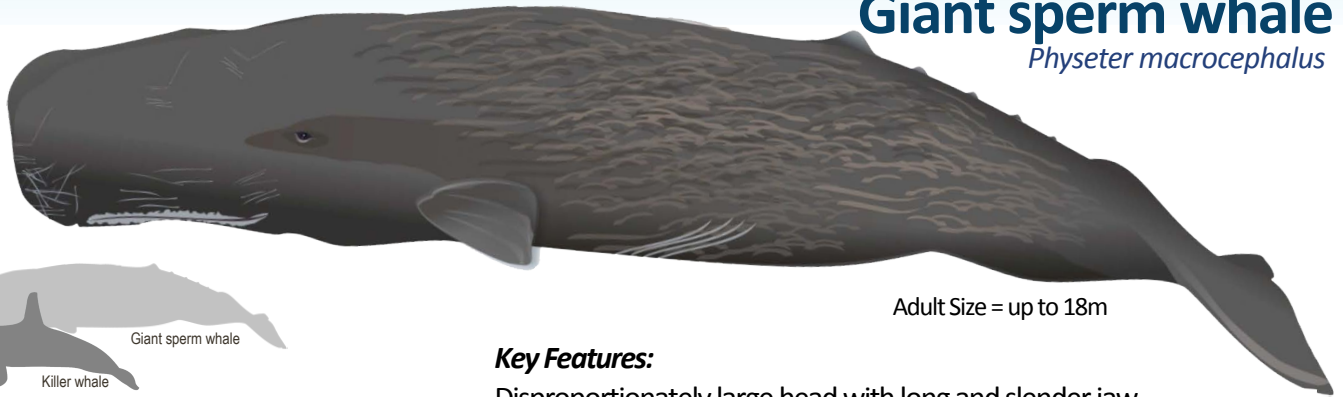
Black body with distinct white oval patch behind its eyes and white throat and underside of the body
Males have very long and erect dorsal fin

Adult Size = 7.0 - 9.0 m

Note: Very rare strander

Giant sperm whale

Physeter macrocephalus

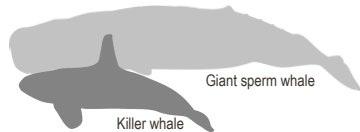


Adult Size = up to 18m

Key Features:

Disproportionately large head with long and slender jaw

Note: Frequent strander



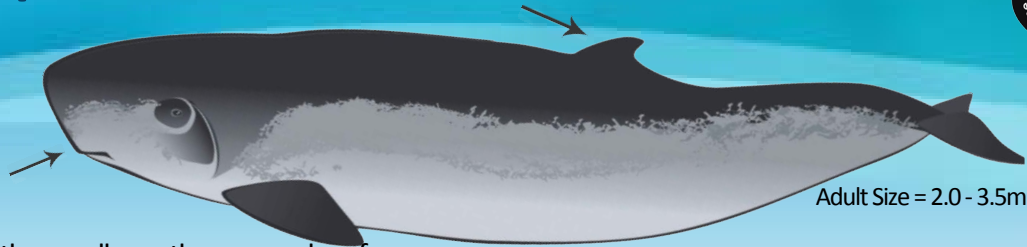
Giant sperm whale

Killer whale



Pygmy sperm whale

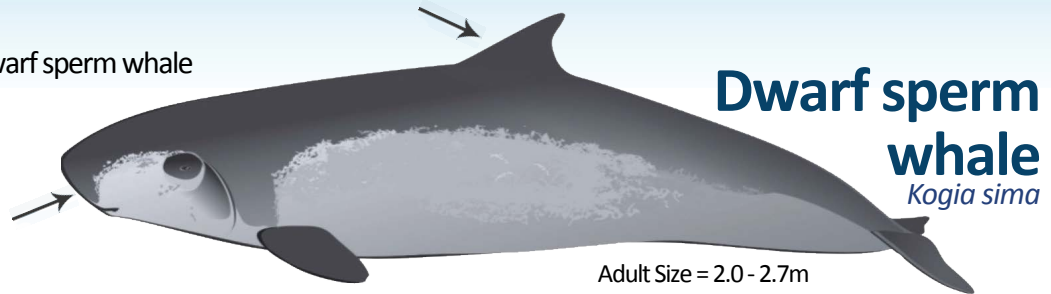
Kogia breviceps



Key Features:

- Head is broad with a small mouth same as dwarf
- Small, falcate dorsal fin located in the caudal third of the body
- Has 12-16 pairs of sharp teeth that are clear/translucent due to lack of enamel
- Releases reddish, brown fluid from its anus when stressed

Note: Rare strander
Often mistaken as Dwarf sperm whale



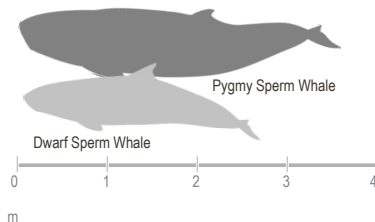
Dwarf sperm whale

Kogia sima

Key Features:

- Head is broad with a small mouth
- Prominent dorsal fin located in the middle section of the body
- Has short, longitudinal grooves on the throat
- Has 3 (upper jaws) and 7-13 (lower jaw) pairs of teeth that are white
- Releases reddish, brown fluid from its anus when stressed

Note: Very frequent strander



Blainville's beaked whale

Mesoplodon densirostris



Adult Size = 3.3 - 4.6m

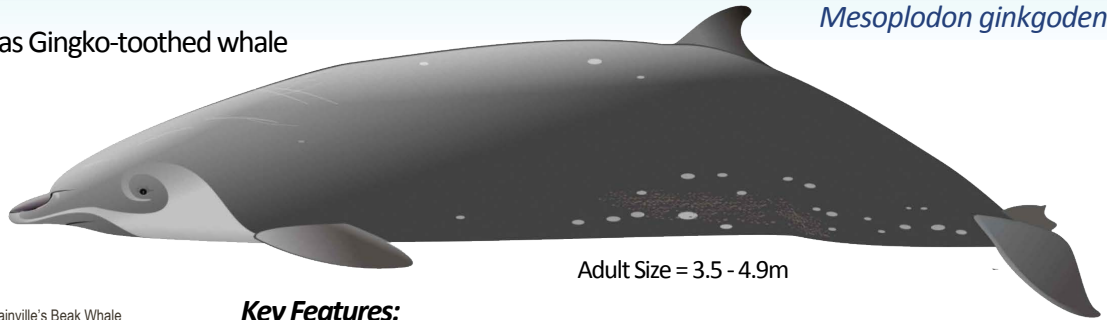
Key Features:

Male adults have a distinct rostrum with forward-arching lower jaw and erupted teeth
Tail section is slender

Note: Rare strander
May be mistaken as Ginkgo-toothed whale

Ginkgo-toothed whale

Mesoplodon ginkgodens

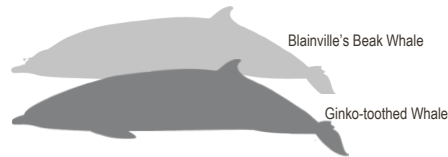


Adult Size = 3.5 - 4.9m

Key Features:

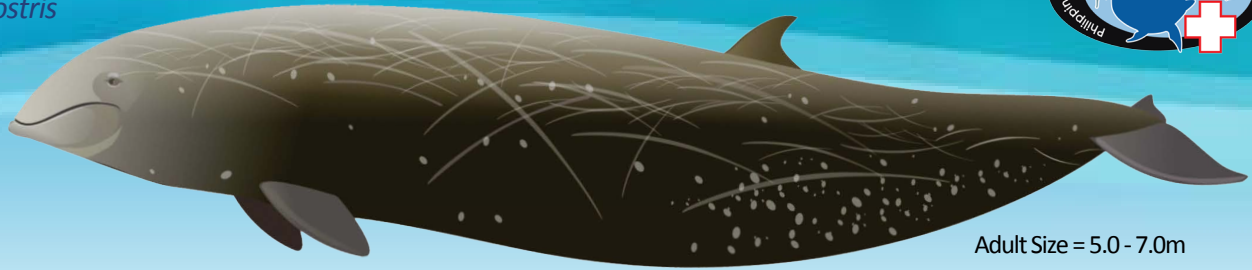
Distinct rostrum with adult males having a pair of teeth about two-thirds towards the front of the lower jaw Tail fluke has no notch

Note: Very rare strander
May be mistaken as Blainville's beaked whale



Cuvier's beaked whale

Ziphius cavirostris



Key Features:

Rostrum has goose-like profile

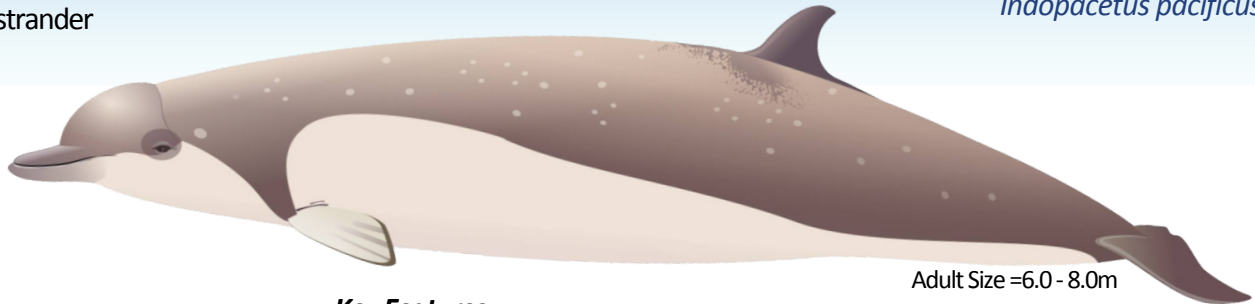
Adult males have a pair of conical teeth at the end of lower jaw

Note: Rare strander

Adult Size = 5.0 - 7.0m

Longman's beaked whale

Indopacetus pacificus



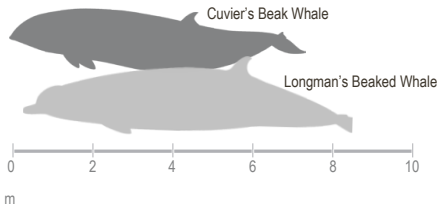
Adult Size = 6.0 - 8.0m

Key Features:

Dark brown in color with a pronounced melon

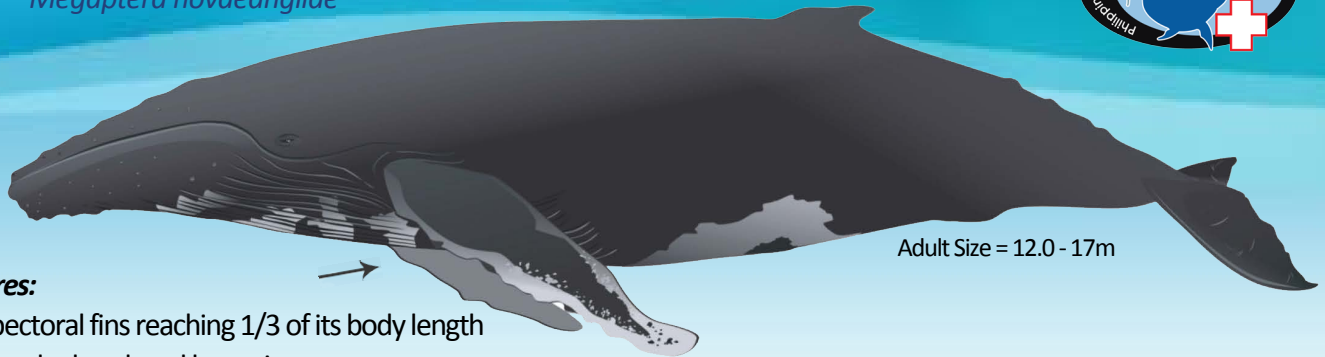
Has a pair of small teeth at the tip of lower jaw

Note: Very rare strander
Only 10 known specimens worldwide



Humpback whale

Megaptera novaeangliae



Adult Size = 12.0 - 17m

Key Features:

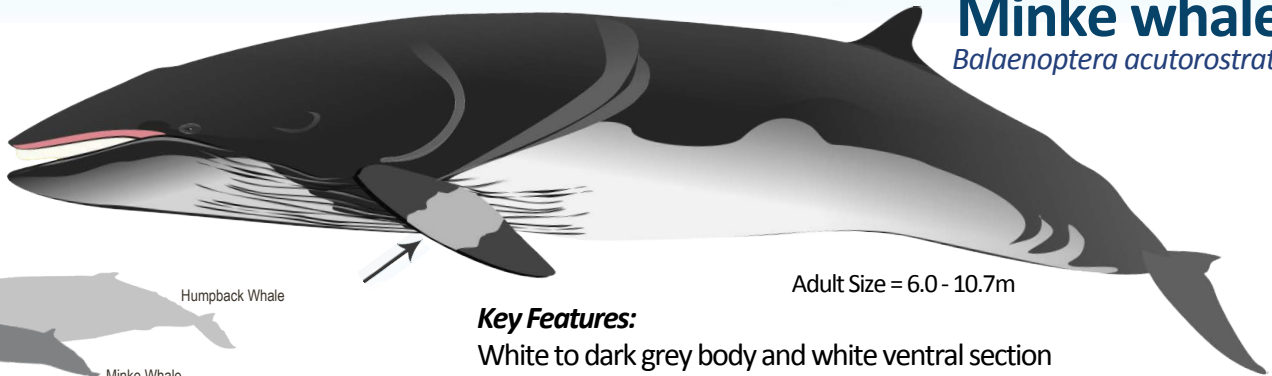
Very long pectoral fins reaching 1/3 of its body length

Tubercles on the head and lower jaw

Note: Rare strander

Minke whale

Balaenoptera acutorostrata



Adult Size = 6.0 - 10.7m

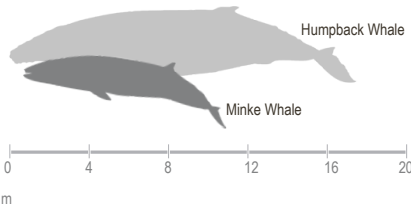
Key Features:

White to dark grey body and white ventral section

White band across its pectoral fins

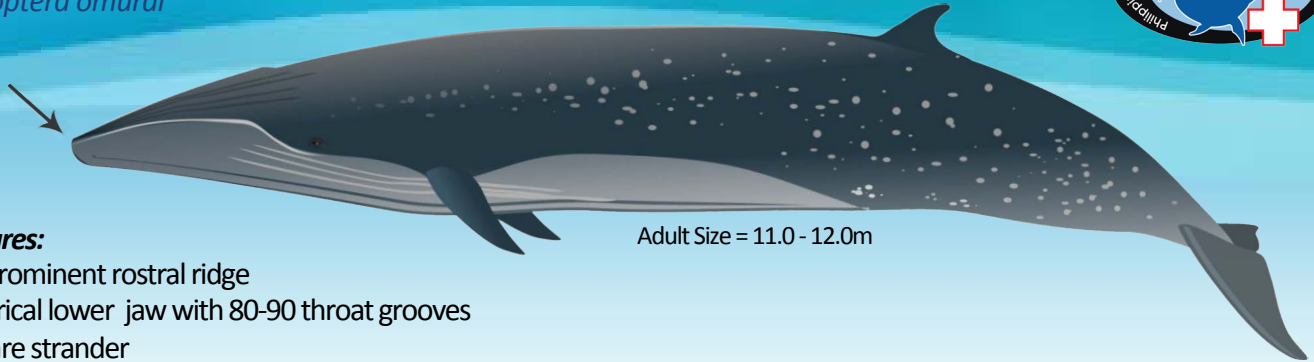
Has 50-70 throat grooves

Note: No stranding incident record



Omura's whale

Balaenoptera omurai



Adult Size = 11.0 - 12.0m

Key Features:

Has one prominent rostral ridge

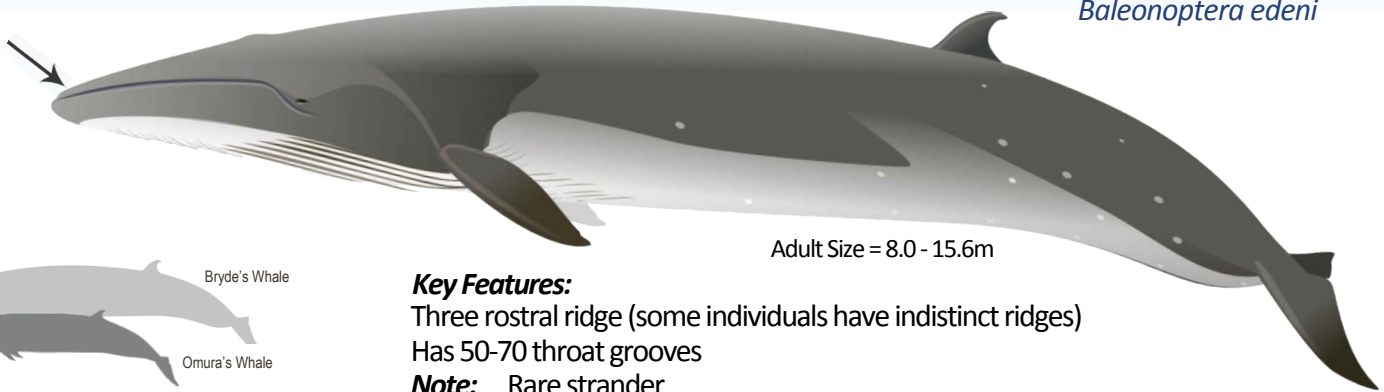
Asymmetrical lower jaw with 80-90 throat grooves

Note: Rare strander

Often mistaken as Bryde's whale

Bryde's whale

Balaenoptera edeni



Adult Size = 8.0 - 15.6m

Key Features:

Three rostral ridge (some individuals have indistinct ridges)

Has 50-70 throat grooves

Note: Rare strander



Fin whale

Balaenoptera physalus

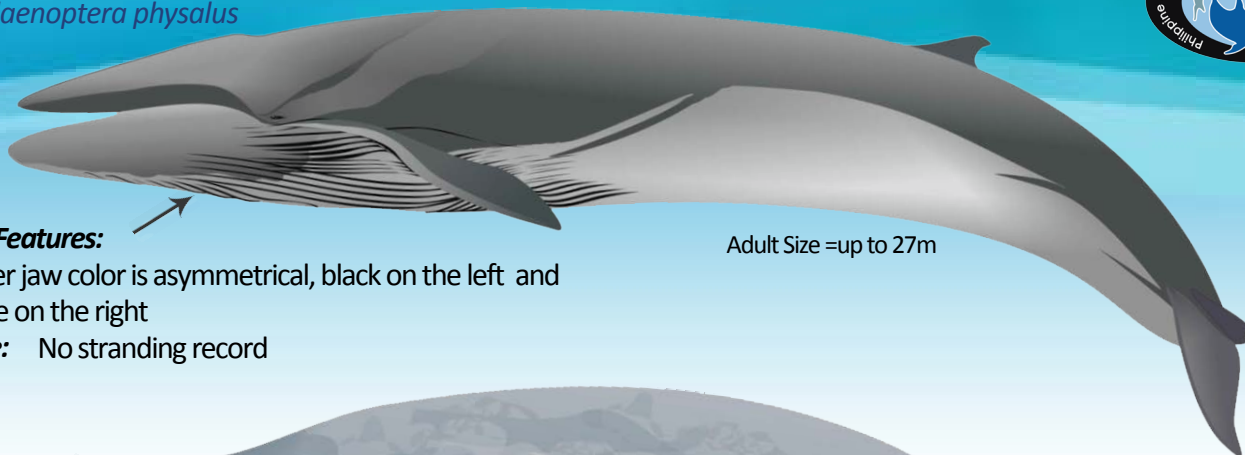


Key Features:

Lower jaw color is asymmetrical, black on the left and white on the right

Note: No stranding record

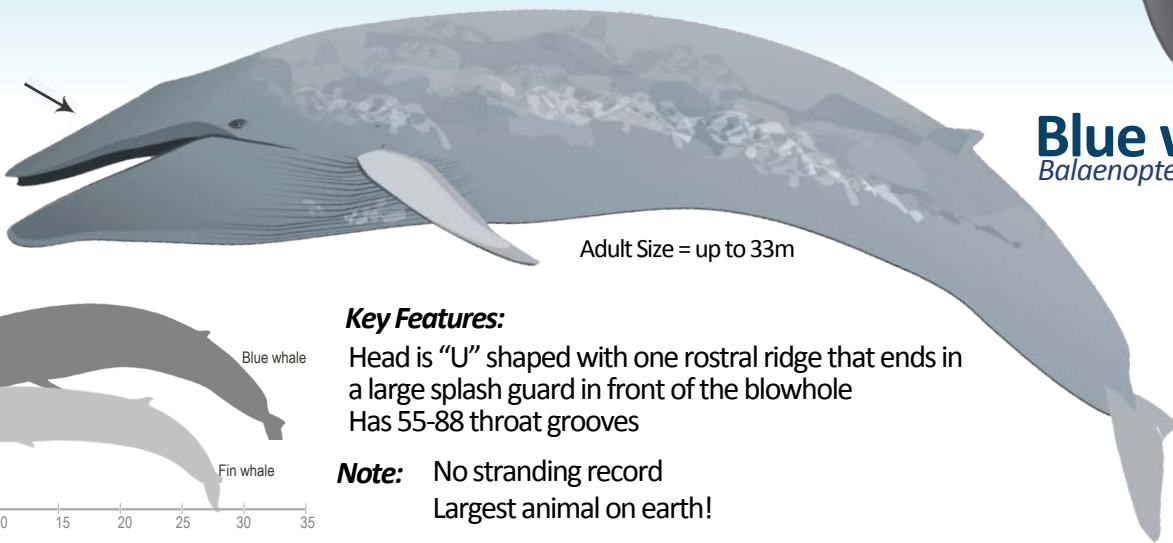
Adult Size = up to 27m



Blue whale

Balaenoptera musculus

Adult Size = up to 33m



Key Features:

Head is "U" shaped with one rostral ridge that ends in a large splash guard in front of the blowhole
Has 55-88 throat grooves

Note: No stranding record
Largest animal on earth!

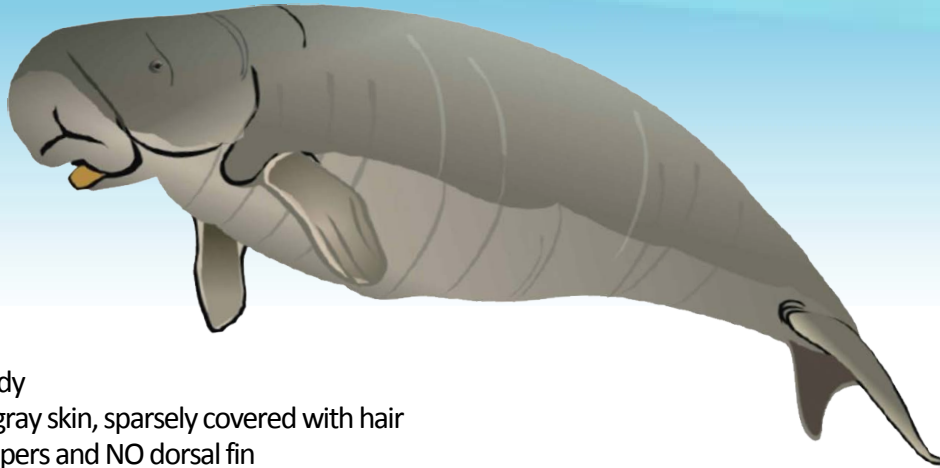


Other Marine Mammals That Strand



Dugong

Dugong dugon



Key Features:

Large, fusiform body

Brownish to dark gray skin, sparsely covered with hair

Has paddle-like flippers and NO dorsal fin

Has a fluked tail similar to dolphins

Note: Frequent Strander

Photodocumentation Guidelines



Photos are extremely important in documentation and necessary for species identification. Follow these guidelines when taking photos, but exercise care when handling live stranders:

- Take a photo of the whole body length of the animal, from head to tail.
- Take the photo as level as possible to its side (lateral).
- For live stranders of small size individuals, gently lift the body slightly above the water surface or gently tilt the body to expose the side, but be careful to protect the eyes and blowhole.
- To give an impression of size, place a familiar object next to the body, ie. a meter stick or person.



Theody Soria

- Include other photos taken from the following perspectives:
 - Close-up, side view of the head from the mouth or rostrum to the eyes.
 - Front, top view of the animal from head to tail.
 - Back, top view of the animal from tail to head.
 - For carcass only, and if manageable, the underside (ventral) of the animal.



For help with identification, send photos to Lemnuel Aragonés, PhD via email at laragones@iesm.upd.edu.ph or via private message to (+63) 928-5018226; or to Bianca Espinos at bgespinos@pmmsn.org.



For documentation purposes, submit photos together with the Stranding Report Form to your regional DA-BFAR office and to the moderator of the PMMSN database, Lemnuel Aragonés, PhD (laragones@iesm.upd.edu.ph).



PMMSN FIELD GUIDE

to the whales and dolphins of the Philippines

PMMSN is the official marine mammal stranding response network in the Philippines.
Report stranding events to the following contact details for advice and assistance

DA-BFAR _____

Contact No: _____

Email: _____

PMMSN Hotline

Contact No: 0928-5018226

Email: laragones@iesm.upd.edu.ph, bgespinos@pmmsn.org

All information on this field guide were taken from the
PMMSN Marine Mammal Stranding Response Manual, 2nd Ed. 2013
(LV Aragon, GE Laule, BG Espinos)

www.pmmsn.org

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