# Dolphins on Alert

## Objective

Students will become aware of hazards (both natural and imposed by people) to dolphins in their environment.

## Materials

For each student:

- ❑ A copy of Dolphins On Alert funsheet on page 3
- ❑ Scissors
- ❑ Crayons or markers
- ❑ Glue or paste
- ❑ Construction paper

Per class:

- ❑ A copy of Dolphins On Alert funsheet on page 3, cut out and sorted into categor
- Masking tape

## Background

Dolphins face many challenges living in the ocean. Besides finding food and shelter, dolphins also must avoid danger. Natural predators and human hazards are two dangers dolphins may face every day.

Sharks are a dolphin's main predator. Dolphin remains are often found in the stomachs of tiger sharks, dusky sharks,and bull sharks. On occasion, killer whales may feed on some species of dolphins.

In some parts of the world, humans hunt certain types of dolphins for food. Yet even when they're not hunted, dolphins are threatened by some human activities.

Toxic chemical that pollute nearshore waters may contaminate the fish that dolphins eat. Scientists believe these chemicals might affect the health of dolphins and cause tumors. Pollution may have contributed to the deaths of dolphins that have washed up on beaches in recent years.

In the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, tuna travel under dolphin pods. When tuna fishermen set their nets around the dolphins to catch tuna, the dolphins are trapped too. To help save dolphins, many tuna fishermen now use special nets and techniques to release the dolphins.

A more deadly type of fishing is done with gill nets. These nets stretch for miles across the ocean and extend deep under water. Once the fishermen have set the net, they leave the net, and return a few hours or days later to haul in the nets. They remove the fish they want, and throw away all the other animals. Thousands of dolphins and other marine creatures drown or die in thes huge nets each year.

## Action

1. Distribute materials to students. Explain that the pictures show things that can harm bottlenose dolphins.
2. Ask students to cut apart their cards and sort them into two piles: one for "Natural Hazards" and "Human Hazards."
3. When students are finished cutting and sorting, lead a discussion to help them determine if they've sorted their cards correctly. To do this, write "Natural Hazards" and "Human Hazards" in large letters on the chalkboard. Hold up one of your cards and ask a volunteer to place it under the correct heading. Explain why the card is a hazard for a bottlenose dolphin. Ask students to sort their cards to match the board.
4. After the discussion, students can glue their cards under the correct headings. Students should also glue the two headings on their construction paper. Students may color the cards if they wish.

## Answers

Natural Hazards: Killer whales hunt bottlenose dolphins; some sharks catch dolphins; some dolphins, especially false killer whales, can become stranded on beaches and die.

Human Hazards: dolphins can become sick from eating trash; ocean water becomes polluted by leaking oil, factory chemicals and waste water; dolphins can get caught in fishing nets or entangled in fishing

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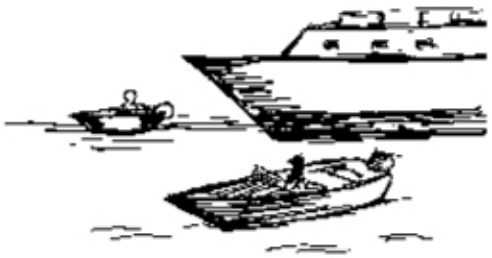
whale on beach

trash

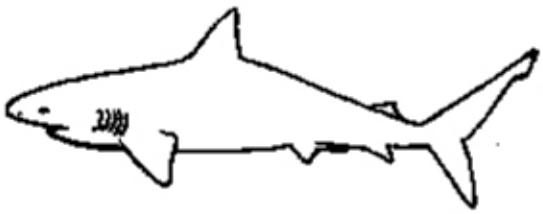


speeding boats

factory smoke


spilled oil

killer whale



shark

fishing nets