

Important Contact Information:

Please report stranded, injured, or dead marine mammals to:
The Bahamas Stranding Network
(242) 544-5409

For more information:

The Bahamas Department of
Marine Resources
(242) 393-1777

The Bahamas Marine Mammal
Research Organisation
(242) 366-4155

Stranding Response Checklist

- Towels and sheets
- Buckets
- Shovel
- Handheld VHF/Cell phone
- Zinc Oxide
- Tarp
- Stranding Field Kit
- Marine Mammals Ashore: A Field Guide for Strandings
- Stranding Data Form
- List of contact numbers/names
- Plastic measuring tape (in cm)
- Cooler with ice pack (for specimens collected)

Species Identification Guide

Use these photos, and others throughout the brochure, to help identify marine mammals that you encounter.



Blainville's beaked whale. *Note:* arched lower jaw, single blow-hole, small dorsal fin far back on body, no notch in tail fluke, 2 teeth in adult males, no teeth visible in females. Adults are 15ft. *Similar species:* Cuvier's beaked whale (cover) are larger, reaching 23 feet. Adult male Cuvier's have 2 teeth at the tip of the lower jaw and have white colouration around the head.



Atlantic spotted dolphin. *Note:* 7.5ft in length, streamlined bodies, small pectoral fins, and freckle-like spots in maturing individuals—the older the animal the more spots. *Similar species:* Pan-tropical spotted dolphins, which are smaller in length and weight and have a distinct dark cape from the melon back behind the dorsal fin. Both species are unspotted at birth so can be confused with coastal bottlenose dolphins which reach just over 8 ft (males) in the Bahamas.



Short-finned pilot whale. *Note:* blunt forehead (no beak), large extremely curved dorsal fin (largest in adult males) located far forward on the body. Black all over, except for white colouration on ventral side (between pectoral fins). Females reach 18ft and males 23ft in length. May strand in groups.

The Bahamas Marine Mammal Stranding Network



A partnership of the Bahamas Marine Mammal Research Organisation, the Bahamas Department of Marine Resources and people like YOU!



To report stranded, injured, or dead marine mammals call:
(242) 544-5409

A marine mammal has stranded in your area.

What do you do?

1. **Determine if the animal is alive or dead.** Some larger cetaceans may have a 20 minute breathing interval! Look for opening and closing of the blowhole which will indicate breathing.
2. **Call for help.** Relay the information in the "What to ask" section.
3. **If alive: don't push or drag animals back into the water.** More harm than good is often done during rushed attempts to refloat a stranded cetacean. DO NOT attempt to move the animal without first seeking professional advice. NEVER attempt to drag an animal back into the water by its tail.
4. **Stabilize the Animal.** The goal is to ensure that the animal can breathe and that it will not overheat or become too stressed.
5. **Support the animal in an upright position** if possible, digging trenches under the pectoral fins.
6. **Keep the animal moist** by covering it with wet blankets or towels, sprayed or doused with a constant supply of water.
7. **Do not cover or obstruct the blowhole** and make every effort to keep sand and water away from the blowhole.
8. **Try to provide shade for the animal** by erecting a tarpaulin above it.
9. **All noise, contact and disturbance around the animal MUST be kept to a minimum.** Keep dogs/pets away from the animal.
10. **Human safety.** Care should be taken around the tail fluke of the animal as a thrashing cetacean can maim or kill. Also, minimize contact with the animal (use gloves if necessary) and avoid inhaling the animal's expired air.
11. **Crowd control.** Identify someone to control onlookers, and to ensure that the veterinary and rescue teams can get on with the job, without unnecessary interference. Rope off the area (apart from essential personnel caring for the animal).



Rescue workers should stay forward of the animal's tail, or well clear. The animal may thrash unpredictably.

Dig a trench for pectoral fins. Use the water to keep the animal cool.

Use damp towels or sheets to keep the animal moist at all times and to protect it from the sun.

Keep blowhole clear and monitor for breathing.

A stranded Bryde's whale in Abaco. This animal had been entangled in trash prior to stranding and was emaciated.

What to ask? (when receiving a stranding report)

1. Is the marine mammal alive?
2. Where is the stranding located? Get specific information.
3. Is the species known? Have the caller describe the animal's size, colour and physical characteristics.
4. How many animals are there?
5. What kind of beach is it on? (sand, rubble, or rocky coast?)
6. What are the current environmental conditions? (weather, sea state, tide)
7. How can you contact them? (VHF, cell phone)



Data Collection

Minimum data collection for any marine mammal stranding in The Bahamas:

- ⇒ Location of Stranding
- ⇒ Species
- ⇒ Actions taken

This information should be submitted to:
**Bahamas Dept. of Marine Resources and
Bahamas Marine Mammal Research Org.**

RESOURCE MATERIALS

www.bahamaswhales.org

There you will find downloadable versions of:
* *The Marine Mammal Stranding Form*
* *A Basic Field Guide to Necropsy*
* *Field Guide to Common Whales and Dolphins of Abaco*