**Irrawaddy dolphin** *(Orcaella brevirostris.)*

**Distribution:** Southeast Asia (see map below and full list of countries in the detailed species account online at: [https://wwhandbook.iwc.int/en/species/irrawaddy-dolphin](https://wwhandbook.iwc.int/en/species/irrawaddy-dolphin))

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- **A pronounced and rounded forehead**
- **No distinct beak**
- **Flexible neck—unusual among dolphin species, results in a slight depression behind the head in some**
- **Long broad paddle-like flippers (can vary in shape)**
- **A light underside which may appear almost white in muddy water**
- **A low blunt dorsal fin, which can vary a great deal in shape**
- **Narrow tail stock**

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**Adult length:** 2.8m  
**Adult weight:** up to 130kg (male)  
**Newborn:** 90-100cm / 10-12kg

**Threats:** Bycatch, habitat loss  
**Habitat:** Estuarine, coastal/nearshore  
**Diet:** Fish

**IUCN Conservation status: Endangered**

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**Fun Facts**

- *Irrawaddy dolphins in Ayarewaddy river in Myanmar help fishermen by herding fish in to their nets. The dolphins are rewarded by the fishermen, who throw them some of the catch.*
- *This species is also known to spit water out of its mouth—apparently as a tactic to stun or herd fish.*

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*Irrawaddy dolphins feeding in close proximity to a fishing vessel in Sarawak, Malaysia: Photo courtesy Cindy Peter/Sarawak Dolphin Project.*

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Irrawaddy dolphins are patchily distributed throughout freshwater and coastal areas in Southeast Asia. They tend to be associated with areas of freshwater input, such as river deltas, mangrove channels, and large estuaries. They are sometimes shy, and difficult to approach and photograph. A related species, the Australian Snubfin dolphin *(Orcaella heinsohni)* is found only off the North coast of Australia and around Papua New Guinea.