

# Dolphins have a reputation for being friendly



*Please observe the natural behavior of wild dolphins from a safe distance of at least 50 yards.*

however,  
they are  
really wild  
animals  
who  
should be  
treated

with caution and respect. Interactions with people change the behavior of dolphins for the worse. They lose their natural wariness which makes them easy targets for vandalism and shark attacks.

For the dolphins' sake, and for your safety, please **DON'T FEED, SWIM WITH OR HARASS WILD DOLPHINS.** We encourage you to observe them from a distance of at least 50 yards. Please use binoculars or telephoto lenses to get a closer view. If you would like to get up close and personal with dolphins, the MMPA provides for the public display of marine mammals in zoos and aquariums. Contact the Office of Protected Resources for a list of facilities that hold dolphins.

OFFICE OF PROTECTED RESOURCES  
National Marine Fisheries Service

1315 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
301-713-2289

[www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot.res/prot.res.html](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot.res/prot.res.html)

## Let the wild ones stay wild

NOAA FISHERIES ENFORCEMENT HOT LINE  
1-800-853-1964



The maximum fine for violating the MMPA is \$20,000 and one year in jail.



NOAA Fisheries

Grateful acknowledgment to the following individuals for providing the photographs: Randall S. Wells, *Chicago Zoological Society*, Thomas M. Murphy, *South Carolina Department of Natural Resources*, Ania Driscoll-Lind and Jan Ostman-Lind, *Kula Nai'a Wild Dolphin Research Foundation*

# Protect Dolphins



## admire them from a distance



## Dolphins are hunters, not beggars...



*Dolphins need their space, especially mothers with young.*

but when people offer them food, dolphins, like most animals, take the easy way out. They learn to beg for a living, lose their fear of humans, and do

dangerous things.

## They swim too close to churning boat propellers...



*Danger! These dolphins are at risk of being cut by propellers!*

and can be severely injured. They learn to associate people with food and get entangled with fishing hooks and lines and die.

They get sick from

eating bait and people food like beer, pretzels, candy and hot dogs.

## Dolphin scientists have proof of injuries...



*This dolphin was hit by a boat and its dorsal fin was severely injured.*

feeding wild dolphin disrupts their social groups which threatens their ability to survive in the wild. Young dolphins do not survive if their mothers compete

with them for hand-

outs and don't teach them to forage.



*This dolphin, who was routinely fed by people, was seriously injured around its eye and throat.*

## Dozens of bites have been reported...



*Dolphins can bite the hands that feed them!*

and people have been pulled under the water. A woman who fed a pair of dolphins and then jumped in the water to swim with them was bitten. "I literally ripped my left leg out of its mouth," she said during her week

stay in the hospital.

## Dolphins are not water toys or pets...



*Danger! This dolphin is being taught to depend on people for handouts.*

the Flipper myth of a friendly wild dolphin has given us the wrong idea. Flipper was actually a trained, captive dolphin who did not bite

the hand that fed him. However, truly wild dolphins will bite when they are angry, frustrated, or afraid. When people try to swim with wild dolphins, the dolphins are disturbed. Dolphins who have become career moochers can get pushy, aggressive and threatening when they don't get the hand-out they expect.



*Too close! Don't closely approach, chase or tease wild dolphins—it's dangerous for them and for you!*

## For all these reasons, it is against the law to feed or harass wild dolphins.

The Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) prohibits the "taking" of marine mammals. The term "take" means to harass, hunt, capture, kill, or feed, or attempt any of these activities.