

Marine Mammal Observations made during the ABMRI Dredging Trial 3-23 October 2024, North Haven

On behalf of Coast Unit | Environment, Heritage and Sustainability Division
Department for Environment and Water
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Marine Mammals were sighted once during the Trial.

On 13th October 2024 at 1438 hours, two adult bottlenose dolphins were observed approximately 100m south-west of the dredge, heading south. Dredging was in progress at the time. They were moving steadily and straight, so appeared to be simply travelling by and disinterested in the dredging operations.

The species of dolphin observed was most likely the Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops aduncus*). A very similar-looking species, the common bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*), also lives in SA waters, but tends to be found in deeper water.

I had expected more Marine Mammal (particularly bottlenose dolphin) sightings in this area, given its proximity to the Port River where bottlenose dolphins reside, from personal experience of seeing them fairly frequently while working at sea off the Adelaide coastline, and because dredging may release infauna into the water, attracting fish which, in turn, may attract dolphins and seals.

The Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin is listed as “Near Threatened” in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Braulik et al, 20129). In Australia, bottlenose dolphins are still abundant. However, incidental kills by the fishing industry, habitat degradation and pollution are of concern for bottlenose dolphins (Australian Museum 2024).

References

Braulik, G., Natoli, A., Kiszka, J., Parra, G., Plön, S. & Smith, B.D. 2019. *Tursiops aduncus*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2019: e.T41714A50381127.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2019-3.RLTS.T41714A50381127.en>. Accessed on 21 November 2024.

Australian Museum 2024. [Bottlenose Dolphin - The Australian Museum](https://australian.museum/learn/animals/mammals/bottlenose-dolphin/#:~:text=Conservation%20status,increasing%20concern%20for%20Bottlenose%20Dolphins)
<https://australian.museum/learn/animals/mammals/bottlenose-dolphin/#:~:text=Conservation%20status,increasing%20concern%20for%20Bottlenose%20Dolphins>