



MARINE MAMMAL  
FOUNDATION

RESEARCH + EDUCATION + CONSERVATION  
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# THE BURRUNAN DOLPHIN

## TURSIOPS AUSTRALIS

The Burrunan dolphin was discovered, described and named in 2011 by Marine Mammal Foundation's Founding Director, Dr Kate Charlton-Robb. Dr Kate's research has resulted in the Burrunan dolphin being listed as 'Endangered' under the Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. The formal naming of the Burrunan is just the tip of the iceberg.

The Burrunan dolphin is about 2.5m in length and has a distinct tri-colouration pattern, from dark grey on the upper side of the body, a paler grey midline and cream underside. The cream underside can extend over the eye, whilst the grey mid-line forms shoulder blaze (a brush-stroke pattern) below the falcate (curved) dorsal fin. The Burrunan has broad tail flukes, a prominent rounded head and a short stubby rostrum (nose).

Project Burrunan is the only research program of its kind in Victoria, with a special focus on the newly described dolphin species. Our research aims to further protect and conserve this charismatic & endemic dolphin. To achieve this, our research focuses on robust population estimates, levels of residency through genetic and individual dolphin fin identification, assesses movement patterns and potential migration pathways, identifies areas of significance across coastal Victoria and investigates the threats affecting these amazing creatures.

YOUR SUPPORT HELPS US  
CONDUCT THIS CRITICAL RESEARCH

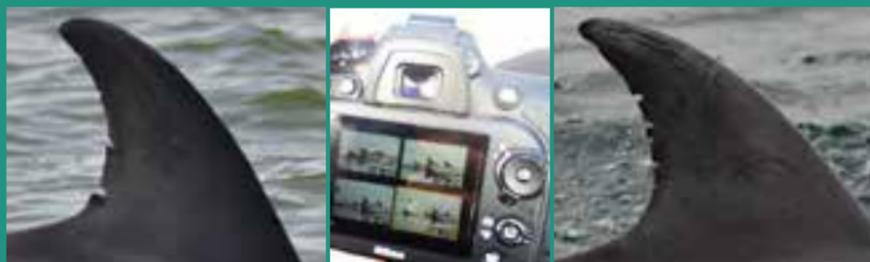
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# HOW DO WE ID OUR DOLPHINS?

MMF researchers use the dolphin's **dorsal fin** to identify each individual dolphin in our populations. Dolphins gain nicks and notches, usually on the trailing edge of the dorsal fin, and those markings act like a '**FINGERprint**'. Our researchers spend hundreds of hours on the water collecting photographs and assessing behaviours, interactions, movement patterns and calving rates.



With only **250 Burrunan dolphins** across the Port Phillip Bay and Gippsland Lakes populations, there is much we can and should do to **protect** these amazing animals! You can **help** by becoming an AMMCF Member, making a donation, reporting marine mammal sightings or inappropriate human/vessel interactions and saying no to plastics!

## FUN FACTS

-  Burrunan dolphins were formally described and named in 2011. There have only been four new dolphin species discovered since the late 1800s!
-  The Latin name for the Burrunan is *Tursiops australis*. The common name Burrunan comes from Aboriginal stories meaning "large sea fish of the porpoise kind".
-  There are only two known resident populations in Victoria! Gippsland Lakes & Port Phillip Bay.
-  Mothers form a strong relationship with their babies (known as calves) which can last for three years.
-  The Burrunan dolphins DNA differs from all other dolphins worldwide! They are thought to have split from a common bottlenose ancestor over 1 million years ago!
-  Burrunan dolphins use sound to communicate and find food, known as echolocation.
-  Individual Burrunan dolphins form strong friendships with other dolphins, known as social associations.
-  They can be seen in pods of 2-30 animals.