

Dolphins On Duty

The U.S. Navy trains these supersmart animals to work on lifesaving missions.

GO
ONLINE

Find out why dolphins are amazing.

AS YOU READ

Identify why dolphins were chosen to help the Navy. What makes them a good choice?

In April, a fisherman near Norway spotted a whale near his boat. But it was no ordinary whale. It was wearing straps meant to hold a camera. The straps were labeled with the name of a city in Russia.

WORDS TO KNOW

marine: having to do with the sea

adapt: get used to new conditions

Why would a whale have a camera? Experts had a surprising explanation. They said the whale was probably part of Russia's military. It most likely had been trained as a spy!

This may sound a little fishy. But whales, dolphins, and other **marine** mammals help militaries around the world. That includes the United States Navy. It uses

more than 100 sea animals. These creatures protect our country from underwater dangers.

Star Students

The Navy program started in 1959. Navy experts tried training all sorts of animals, like sharks, sea turtles, and birds. Then they settled on bottlenose dolphins and California sea lions.

Animals Undercover

Check out these other animals that have been used as spies.



Bomb-Sniffing Bees

Bees have a great sense of smell. Since 1999, the U.S. military has trained them to sniff out chemicals in bombs.



Private Pigeon

The U.S. government created a camera small enough for pigeons to carry. But details of how—or when—these cameras were used are top secret.



Suspicious Squirrels

In 2007, 14 squirrels were arrested in Iran for using sensors to spy on the country. But many think this story is nuts.

Both of these animals are smart and easy to train. And both can **adapt** to different environments. For example, they can swim in water that is deep or shallow.

The Navy uses more dolphins than sea lions. That's because dolphins have a skill called echolocation (ek-oh-loh-KAY-shuhn). They can use sound to “see” underwater!

On the Job

The training of dolphins begins when they're young. Experts teach them to look for underwater explosives called mines. Mines can hurt people on military ships.

Mines can be hard for humans to find. But it's easier for dolphins! They can

“see” through dark water by using echolocation. Plus, they can dive deep. When they find a mine, they mark the spot.

Reporting for Duty

Dolphins and sea lions help in other ways too. They look out for enemies who swim too close to Navy ships. This helps keep U.S. troops safe.

The U.S. Navy travels all over the world. So do its animals. Navy animals have worked along the coasts of more than 12 countries. When they aren't on a mission, the creatures prepare for future jobs.

“They will be ready if they are needed,” says Mark Xitco, who runs the Navy program. “They are always on duty!”

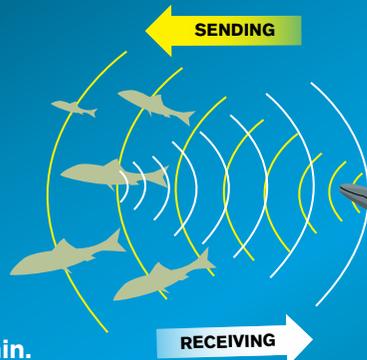
—by Tricia Culligan

HOW IT WORKS Echolocation

Seeing With Sound

1 A dolphin squeaks, sending out sound waves through the water.

2 The waves bounce off an object and echo back to the dolphin.



3 The time it takes for the echo to reach the dolphin tells the dolphin the location of the object.

4 The way the sound echoes tells the dolphin the shape, size, and speed of the object.