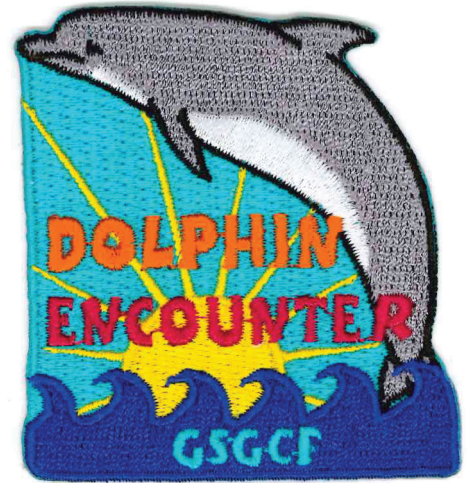


# Dolphin Encounter Patch Program



## INTRODUCTION:

One of the most delightful experiences available to you is the sighting of a marine mammal. For instance, manatees can be observed swimming along the Intercoastal Waterways and feeding over shallow grass flats. Dolphins can be seen feeding and playing, wake surfing, and performing somersaults. These are some of the exciting behaviors that demonstrate their power and grace.

## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

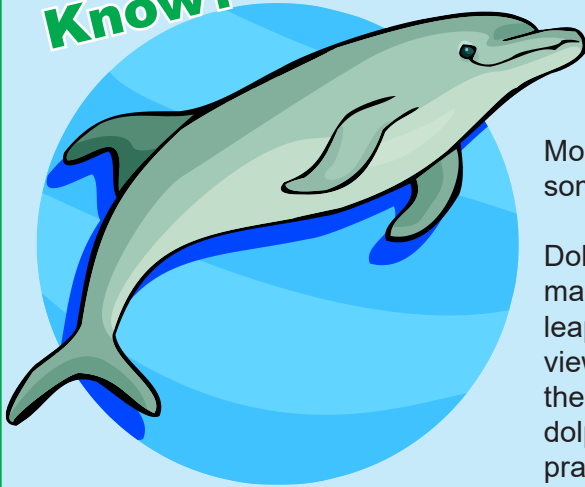
In completing this program, girls will:

- ✦ Gain knowledge about the Gulf of Mexico.
- ✦ Increase understanding, respect, and appreciation of the marine mammals in our area so we all may delight in their existence for generations to come.

## TO EARN THE PATCH:

Girls must complete eight requirements to earn the patch; this patch can only be earned once.

## Did You Know?



Dolphins are part of the family of toothed whales that includes orcas and pilot whales. They are mammals and breathe through a blowhole on the top of their head. Dolphin coloration varies, but they are generally gray in color with darker backs than the rest of their bodies.

Most dolphin species have a long lifespan. It is estimated that some individuals may have lived for more than 100 years.

Dolphins are well known for their agility and playful behavior, making them a favorite of wildlife watchers. Many species will leap out of the water, spy-hop (rise vertically out of the water to view their surroundings), and follow ships, often synchronizing their movements with one another. Scientists believe that dolphins conserve energy by swimming alongside ships, a practice known as bow-riding.

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# Dolphin Encounter

## **DISCOVER:**

- ✦ Learn to recognize the difference between a dolphin and a porpoise. Draw a poster showing what you have discovered. Make a list of some of the differences.
- ✦ What kind of dolphin is most commonly seen frolicking in our local bays and gulf waters? Do they swim alone or in small groups? Locate and illustrate on a local chart, the waters where you might sight these dolphins.
- ✦ Dolphins are mammals, so they need air to breathe, and their young are born alive. Research other marine life creatures that are mammals. Find out if they have unique qualities, the color of their skin, and where they live. Examples are; manatees, otters, porpoises, walruses, sea lions, polar bears, and whales.
- ✦ Public aquariums offer exhibits, hands-on activities, educational sessions, and signs describing marine life. Visit an aquarium, seashore, or marine life exhibit. You may also discover information by researching the internet or books. Learn about at least three species of marine life. You can also make a collage with pictures about marine life.
- ✦ Find out the following about dolphins:
  - How they breathe.
  - How they move through the water and why they use different speeds as well as what advantages their fins give.
  - How they feed. Name the kinds of fish they feed on.
  - How they reproduce.
  - Learn their family ways of living in a pod.
  - How their sonar system called “echolocation” works.

## **CONNECT:**

- ✦ People who study the ocean are called oceanographers. Marine biologists study marine life in the oceans. Define some of the jobs an oceanographer or a marine biologist may have. Would this be a job you would like to have? Try to think of other jobs that involve the study of marine life or oceans.
- ✦ Visit a dolphin live exhibit research center or observe them in the wild in our Intercoastal Waterways or gulf waters. Research their anatomy, environment, and history.
- ✦ Learn how dolphins communicate messages of excitement, danger, and affection. How do they develop their sounds? Blindfold yourself and try to identify objects by the sounds they make.

## **TAKE ACTION:**

- ✦ Find out about the laws in your community and state that protect dolphins. What is the Marine Mammal Protection Act? What year was it passed?
- ✦ Do a service project that will help save our mammals for future generations.
- ✦ Participate in a coastal clean-up day. Learn about how the trash we dump in our oceans, waterways, and drains effects marine mammals.