Hybridization

In 1933, three hybrid dolphins beached off the Irish coast; they were hybrids between Risso's and bottlenose dolphins.^[15] This mating was later repeated in captivity, producing a hybrid calf. In captivity, a bottlenose and a rough-toothed dolphin produced hybrid offspring.^[16] A common-bottlenose hybrid lives at SeaWorld California.^[17] Other dolphin hybrids live in captivity around the world or have been reported in the wild, such as a bottlenose-Atlantic spotted hybrid.^[18] The best known hybrid is the wolphin, a false killer whale-bottlenose dolphin hybrid. The wolphin is a fertile hybrid. Two wolphins currently live at the Sea Life Park in Hawaii; the first was born in 1985 from a male false killer whale and a female bottlenose. Wolphins have also been observed in the wild.^[19]

Evolution

Main article: Evolution of cetaceans



Dolphins display convergent evolution with fish and aquatic reptiles.

Dolphins are descendants of land-dwelling mammals of the artiodactyl order (even-toed ungulates). They are related to the *Indohyus*, an extinct chevrotain-like ungulate, from which they split approximately 48 million years ago.^{[20][21]}

The primitive cetaceans, or archaeocetes, first took to the sea approximately 49 million years ago and became fully aquatic by 5–10 million years later.^[22]

Anatomy



The anatomy of a dolphin showing its skeleton, major organs, tail and body shape.

Dolphins have torpedo-shaped bodies with generally non-flexible necks, limbs modified into flippers, a tail fin, and bulbous heads. Dolphin skulls have small eye orbits, long snouts, and eyes placed on the sides of its head; they lack external ear flaps. Dolphins range in size from the 1.7 m (5 ft 7 in) long and 50 kg (110 lb) Maui's dolphin to the 9.5 m (31 ft 2 in) and 10 t (11 short tons) orca. Overall, they tend to be dwarfed by other Cetartiodactyls. Several species have female-biased sexual dimorphism, with the females being larger than the males.^{[34][35]}