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News

Dolphins enjoy local bounty

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Pod of 25 sighted in Choptank, lonedolphin in Oak Creek

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CAMBRIDGE While Mark Beall had little luck fishing Thursday, he didn't return home empty-handed: He snapped several photographs of dolphins just yards away from his boat.

Beall was fishing in the Choptank River near Cook's Point when he saw a pod of what he estimated was 25 dolphins, including little ones.

With the large predators about, the fish weren't biting, but he did catch some photos of the dolphins swimming right by him.

Another Shore resident, Melissa Guinness, meanwhile, captured a photo of a young dolphin as it swam Friday afternoon in Oak Creek at Newcomb. She's lived there for five years, but said this was the first time she ever saw a dolphin in that area.

The dolphin, which Guinness said was about 3 feet long, was all alone, which led her to believe it had gotten lost. She called the Department of Natural Resources and was told it was not uncommon for dolphins to come to the area for food.

Jamie Schofield, who studies sea turtles and marine mammals as a biologist for the Department of Natural Resources at the Cooperative Oxford Laboratory, said dolphins often will follow food sources into Chesapeake Bay tributaries between May and October, depending on water temperatures.

"It's really common for us to see dolphins in the Choptank River at this time of year," she said.

Dolphins typically travel in large groups, and will stick around as long as there is enough food.

"If they have enough food and they're having fun, they'll stay," she said.

Dolphins will sometimes even follow watermen trawling for crabs, Schofield said.

"They're definitely very smart animals," she said.

People should feel free to enjoy the dolphins' presence, but should not try to approach, touch or feed them, Schofield said. Federal laws prohibit harassing marine mammals.

If someone sees an entangled or distressed dolphin, contact Natural Resources Police at 1-800-628-9944. A dolphin in overly shallow water or swimming in tight circles would be considered stressed, Schofield said.



SUBMITTED PHOTO BY MARK BEALL
Mark Beall shots these photos of dolphins in the Choptank River off of Cook's Point on Thursday morning as he was trying to fish. Beall reports that they were in a pod of about 25 of the mammals that had little ones with them.

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