

Name _____

Dolphin Dwellings: Exploring the Habitats of These Aquatic Marvels

Open-Ended Response Answer Key

1. Dolphins adapt to life in polar regions by developing thick layers of blubber to insulate against the cold, forming tight-knit social groups for warmth and protection, and hunting prey adapted to icy conditions. Challenges they face in these environments include competition for food with other predators, navigation through sea ice, and potential disturbance from human activities such as shipping and resource extraction.
2. Pollution and habitat loss impact dolphin populations in human-made environments by contaminating their food sources, disrupting their natural behaviors, and reducing their access to essential habitats such as breeding and feeding grounds. Habitat loss, in particular, can fragment dolphin populations and increase their vulnerability to other threats such as boat strikes and entanglement in fishing gear.
3. Humans can help mitigate their impacts on dolphin habitats and promote conservation by supporting sustainable fishing practices, reducing pollution and plastic waste, establishing marine protected areas, enforcing regulations to minimize disturbance from boat traffic, and conducting research to better understand dolphin populations and their ecological needs.
4. The destruction of coastal mangrove forests can impact dolphin populations and their coastal habitats by reducing nursery areas for young dolphins, altering water quality and nutrient cycling, and increasing vulnerability to erosion and storm surges. Mangrove forests provide important habitat and food sources for many marine species, including fish and crustaceans that dolphins rely on for prey. Protecting mangrove ecosystems can help maintain healthy coastal habitats and support thriving dolphin populations.

