

You will hear an ecology student called Anne talking to someone called Tom, who is helping her with her project on dolphins.

Anne: Hi, Tom. Thanks so much for agreeing to help me with my dolphin I hope you don't mind that I asked you.

Tom: No problem, Anne. I remember when I was in my first year at university – it was always good to get as much help as possible.

Anne: Yes, I can't believe how quickly my first year is going. There's so much work to finish off. Does it get any easier in the second year?

Tom: Not in my experience, no!

Anne: Anyway, I wanted to do a project on the Maui dolphin because it's so And my tutor told me that you'd done the same thing last year – I mean, you'd studied the Maui dolphin off the coast of New Zealand, and written about it and given a on it too, like I have to now. That's why I thought you'd be the best person to talk to.

Tom: Well, I wouldn't say that I know everything about the Maui dolphin – but I can probably tell you a few things about it.

Anne: Well, that's great. Thanks so much. Um, the first thing I wanted to check – because I keep seeing different information about it – is the length of the Maui dolphin. I think young dolphins – they're about a meter when they're a year old, aren't they?

Tom: Yes, about that. But an dolphin is bigger – the males grow up to 1.5 meters in length, eventually. Still pretty small for a dolphin.

Anne: And the are larger than the males, I think? They can reach 1.7 meters, I read.

Tom: That's correct.

Anne: OK, I'll just write that down.

Tom: Are you going to say something in your project about where you can find Maui dolphins? Have you ever seen one?

Anne: You mean along the west coast of the North Island? I'm afraid I haven't had a chance to go there yet. I grew up in the South Island and I only came to the North Island to go to university. And as you know, even though we have other types of dolphin all along the coast of the South Island, we don't ever see Maui dolphins there.

Tom: Well, I think you'd be quite lucky to see one. Even if you did take a trip out there on a boat.

Anne: Yes, that's the problem, isn't it? That their population is so small.

Tom: About ten years ago, there were 100 Maui dolphins still alive.

Anne: But now scientists believe that number has really dropped. They counted just under 50 this year. It's terrible.

Tom: Yes, the situation is worse than they expected. We can't be sure that the Maui dolphin won't disappear completely until numbers increase to 500 – and that doesn't seem likely at the moment.

Anne: Unfortunately not. Now, I should say something about their typical, I suppose.

Tom: Well, they're certainly very sociable animals. In the past, when their population size was much, much bigger, there were about 30 dolphins in a group – and they'd play and swim together. That's unlike other kinds of dolphin that only travel in pairs or with a few others.

Anne: Yes, that's true. And something that's perhaps different about them, too, is that, in general, they tend to avoid boats. They're of them.

Tom: And so they should be. One of the biggest problems for Maui dolphins is that when people use a particular type of fishing net – when they throw the net off the side of the boat and just leave it in the ocean – then the Maui dolphins sometimes swim into the net and they can't get out again.

Anne: I don't think most people who go fishing would want to hurt a dolphin.

Tom: No, but sometimes their behavior is dangerous. They should remember that we have to share the water with dolphins and whales and other animals.

Anne: Yes, we do. Oh, I've got one more thing I need to check with you. How far along the coastline do Maui dolphins swim?

Tom: Good question. Well, they're actually quite fast for a small dolphin. They only go up to about 50 kilos in weight. Their top speed is about 40 kilometers per hour. But scientists think they only swim a of about 30 kilometers – up and down the same part of the coast – just staying in a fairly small area.

Anne: I see. Well, you'd think that it would be easy for the government to do more to protect them but ...