

□ The Secret Language of Dolphins

A mother dolphin talks to her baby . . . by telephone! The special call was made in an **aquarium** in Hawaii, where the mother and her two-year-old baby swam in separate **tanks**.

“It seemed clear that they knew who they were talking to,” says Don White. But what did they say? Scientists are studying dolphins all over the world to understand their secret language. They don’t understand everything yet, but they’re listening . . . and learning.



Scientists think dolphins *talk* about everything, even such things as their age and how they are feeling. Scientists think that dolphins say things like “there are some good fish over here,” or “watch out for that shark because he’s hunting.” “Sometimes one dolphin will speak and then another will seem to answer,” says Sara Waller, who studies bottlenose dolphins off the California coast. Sometimes they all talk at the same time—like people at a party.



It is difficult to study *dolphin speak* in the sea because dolphins swim very quickly. Also, it seems that one sound can mean many different things. For example, when they are fighting, dolphins **clap** their mouths to say “go away!” But they make the same sound when they are playing. It’s like humans. When you **raise** a hand, it might mean *hello*, *good-bye*, or *stop*.

Scientists still don’t understand everything dolphins *say* but one day, who knows, maybe you’ll get a phone call from a dolphin.