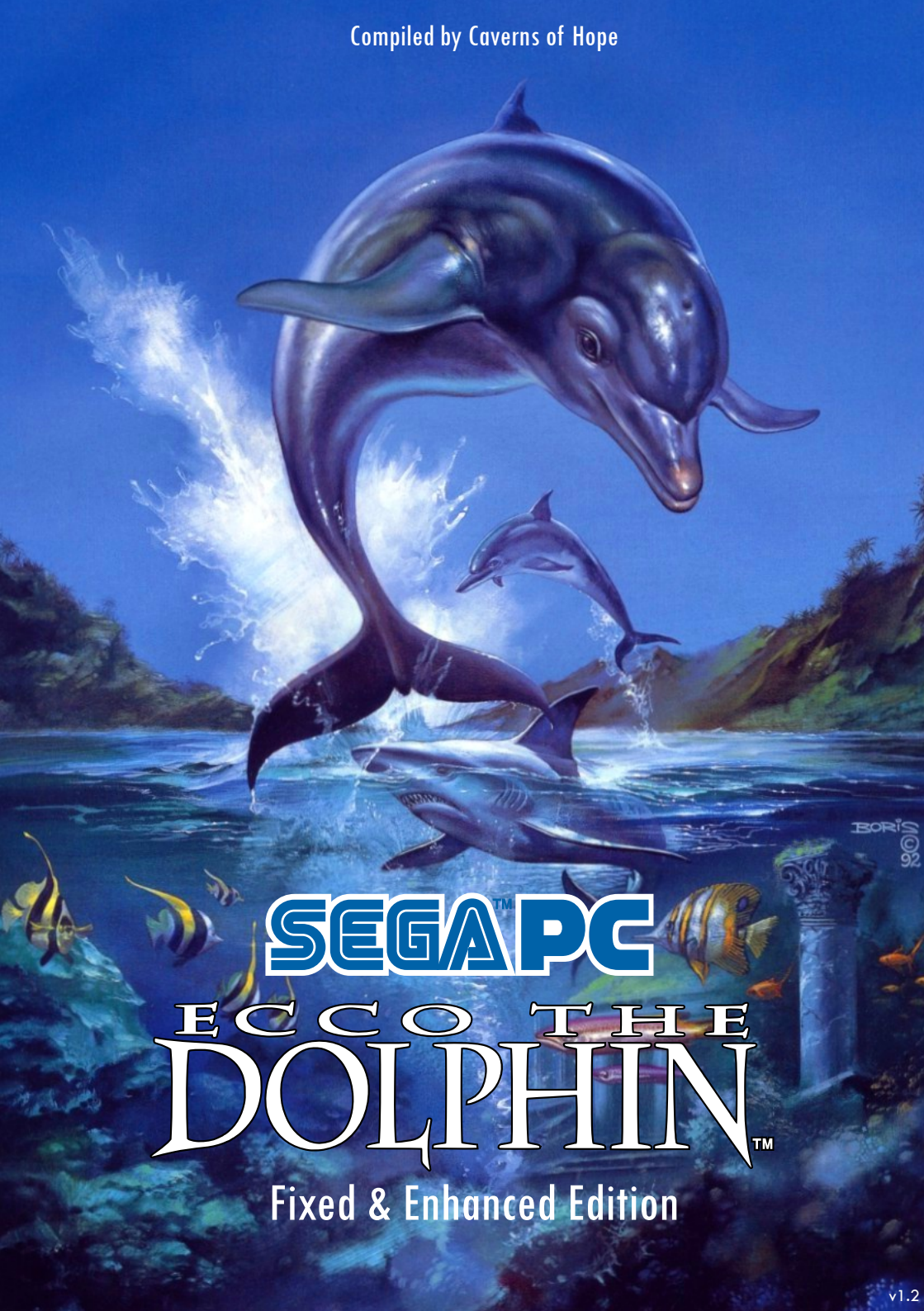
Compiled by Caverns of Hope



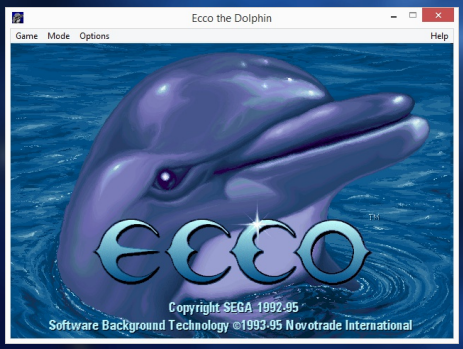
SEGA™ PC

ECCO THE DOLPHIN™

Fixed & Enhanced Edition

v1.2

About this release



Ecco the Dolphin Fan *Korama* has fixed and enhanced the PC Version of *Ecco the Dolphin* that is dysfunctional by itself on modern Windows versions. This release is available for free and makes the classic underwater adventure playable again!

Background

The *SEGA PC* version of *Ecco the Dolphin* (Ecco PC) was released in 1995 and is a Windows 95 port of the original MegaDrive/Genesis release. Unlike other ports that only emulate the original games Ecco PC was rebuilt from the ground and received a lot of additional content and features. Hardly any other game received such a treatment during that era, proving that ports can be much more than simple carbon copies.

Ecco PC combined the greatest features of previous *Ecco the Dolphin* releases and added some great new ones as well: All MegaCD/SegaCD stages are playable, including the *5* Ship Grave Sea levels that were exclusive to this release. Passwords have been replaced by a Save and Restore system. The game can be controlled with a Gamepad/Joystick, the Keyboard and even the Computer Mouse. The wonderful MegaCD/SegaCD Soundtrack has been chosen for the background music, which got highly praised in the videogame world. The 3D rendered videos from the MegaCD/Sega CD release of *Ecco: The Tides of Time* accompany the game, adding a cinematic experience. The often criticised high difficulty of the original Ecco the Dolphin release has been ironed and classified into 3 new difficulties. With releases in the American, European and Japanese regions the game has been translated to *5* languages: English, German, French, Spanish and Japanese.



Most notable is the overall graphical improvement of the game with the addition of the *High Detail* Graphics mode. All graphics have been redrawn for this mode, doubling the detail and increasing the resolution from 320x240 pixels in the console versions to 640x480 pixels in the PC version. Zsolt Balogh, the original artist of the *Ecco the Dolphin* console releases and his team recreated the sprites and backgrounds with a tremendous amount of detail rarely seen in any other port of that time.

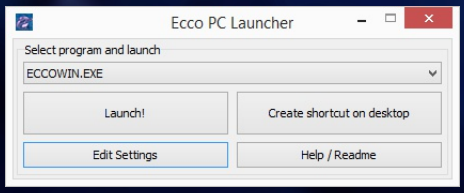


Fixes and Enhancements

Ecco PC has been struggling to work on every new version of Windows, eventually becoming unplayable even with built in OS compatibility fixes activated. Fortunately Korama has been continuously fixing the game, creating install and patch tools to make the game playable again. The latest *Ecco PC* fix by Korama makes the game fully playable on Windows Vista, 7 and 8! Besides fixing all the original game functions, Korama also added several enhancements that improve the quality of the game even more.

One of the best new features is the addition of audio file playback such as MP3/OGG/WAV stored on your hard drive. This replaces the buggy original CD audio playback and you can even compile and play custom soundtracks! We've added the MegaDrive/Genesis Soundtrack ripped by the 16bit Audiophile Project to let you experience the original console chip music in high quality! Also, *Ecco PC* now features the full range of sound effects, also ripped directly from console by the 16bit Audiophile Project - the original *Ecco PC* release had only 10 sound effects.

All fixes and enhancements are applied by an external Launcher program written by Korama. A graphical user interface lets you configure settings and features easily. Here's an overview of all the fixes and features - for further details check *Korama's Ecco PC Launcher README* from the install folder:



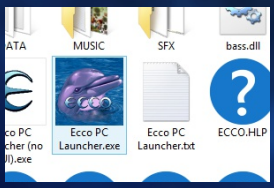
- A Launcher tool with a GUI to change settings on the fly.
- Makes all game releases run on Windows Vista, 7 and 8/8.1 32-bit and 64-bit versions.
- Fixes all five graphic modes, and the save/restore functions.
- Full portability: all data is saved and received from within the same folder.
- Music playback from audio files (MP3, WAV, OGG and more) via bass.dll. Check www.un4seen.com/bass.html for more information.
- The time travel music is now played for the first time in a CD release of *Ecco the Dolphin*.
- Full range of Sound Effects, ripped by 16bit Audiophile Project, has been added back.
- Better Palette cycle effects: makes surface wave ripples animate smoother and smoothens palette transitions (diving through depth zones, switching between layouts, window focus).



Setup and Options for the Ecco PC Launcher

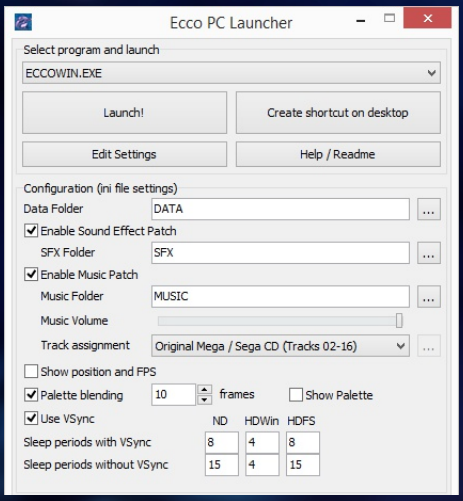
Follow these instructions for a safe installation. Steps 5 - 11 are fully optional.

1) If you haven't done already, unzip all contents from the *Ecco PC fixed and enhanced Edition* ZIP file to a new folder on your hard drive.
2) Place the ECCOPC folder low in your directory structure. Too long paths (>128 characters) make the game crash. Something like C:*Games*\ECCOPC works fine!
3) Open *Ecco PC Launcher.exe* - if you run it the first time, a pop up message will prompt you, click OK to proceed.
4) *Launch!* the game!



Optional steps: for tweaking and troubleshooting, continue reading.

5) The Launcher will automatically select the European Release. You can select a different *Ecco PC* Version from the drop down menu if you want to play other Region releases, such as the U.S. or Japanese versions.
6) The *Desktop Shortcut* button will create a desktop that launches the game immediately.
7) Click *Edit Settings* to open the configuration settings menu. Any errors such as wrong folder links will be marked in red color.
8) The *Data Folder* contains all the stage data. To make *Ecco PC* fully portable, set all folders to relative paths like pictured right.
9) Sound and Music are configured to play the full range of SegaCD/MegaCD music and Sound Effects. Change the *Music Volume* with the slider. You can assign your own custom soundtrack by choosing the option from the *Track assignment* drop down list. Check the *Custom Tracks* section for more information!

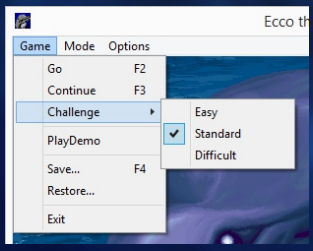


10) *Palette blending* controls the palette cycle animation speed. Activate *Show Palette* to display it in the game screen for debug.
11) Tweak the game speed with the lowermost two lines. Activate FPS to check if the game is running smoothly - FPS will be shown during gameplay. Values around 60 FPS are optimal. For detailed information, refer to the *Ecco PC Launcher README*.

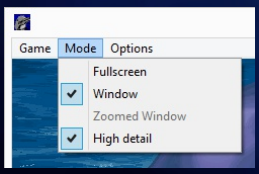


The Ecco PC program interface

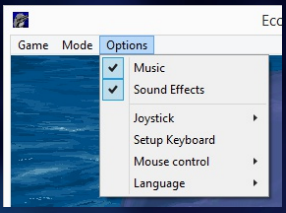
After successfully launching *Ecco PC*, you're given a nice greet by Ecco, him typically sticking his head out of the water and looking at you. More importantly, you're given a couple menu options you should take note of.



The *Game* menu lets you start the game, change the difficulty and Save/Restore your progress. The game autosaves your progress while playing, *Continue* will get you back to the last stage/checkpoint. The difficulty can be changed at any point in the game from the *Challenge* menu. Selecting another difficulty changes the amount of enemies, hit points and Ecco's air capacity. *Save/Restore* menus have been fixed for this release giving you more slots than in the original version.



The modestly named *Mode* menu controls the graphics resolution and lets you choose from *Fullscreen* and *Windowed* modes. Activate *High Detail* to play the game with the beautiful redrawn graphics in twice the resolution of the original console versions. If you prefer the old fashioned way, deactivate High Detail and the game uses the original graphics. Normal Detail will give you another option called *Zoomed Window* which scales the window times 2.



The *Options* menu contains input settings and activates/mutes the *Music* and *Sound Effects* (the music volume can now also be changed from the Launcher!). The European release lets you choose from four languages. The *Joystick* menu activates and configures a connected gamepad. Click *Setup* to assign the four buttons. *Setup Keyboard* lets you configure assigned keys. Note: Keyboard controls are always active, which is especially important for pausing the game while playing with mouse. The *Mouse control* menu offers you two modes. Check the *Playing the Game* section to find out how they work!

The *Help* menu opens the original help documentation files. Current Windows version don't support the outdated .HLP file type, resulting in an error on attempt to open. Fortunately, Microsoft offers a fix for this. Search the Microsoft website for "Windows Help Program" to download an Update for your specific Windows version. This will let you display the original Help file from within *Ecco PC*. The *About* menu option contains game credits.



Playing the Game

Ecco the Dolphin tells a story about the events after a mysterious tornado pulls your pod into the sky. Ecco, being the only one spared, must travel the dangerous depths of the ocean to find out what happened to his pod. Soon you will recognize that this is far more than a random natural disaster, as the story turns into a true science fiction tale. No worries though, you have several methods to fend off the ocean's hazards, and in time you'll receive advanced techniques and powers to survive in the waters.



Ecco can freely move in 8 directions. Roam through the water by pressing one of the directions. Additionaly press and hold the *Speed Up* button to accelerate. Press it a couple times and hold it to swim even faster! When moving horizontally or vertically you can make a 180° turn by pressing the opposite direction. Any other change of direction will make Ecco adjust by curving around a little.



You can make a short dash by pressing the *Attack* button. This will also boost you to high speed immediately. Dash at schools of fish to eat a snack and increase your health. Dash at enemies and hazards to destroy them, making them fade into sea foam. Ecco will automatically target enemies close to him.



Dolphins use *Sonar* to communicate and orientate. Press the *Sonar* button to send a wave of sound in front of you. Use this to communicate and interact with other cetaceans and sea life creatures. Many of them have important messages to help you on your quest, or they'll move on your command. Hold the *Sonar* button to utilize Ecco's echolocation. A map of your surroundings will let you see beyond Ecco's eyesight.

Mouse Controls

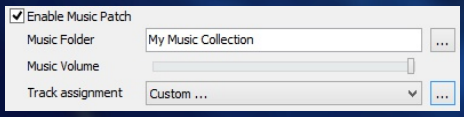
Ecco PC can be controlled with your computer mouse. Point in the direction you want Ecco to swim and he'll follow your lead. There are two mouse control modes to choose from. Mode 1 varies Ecco's acceleration by the distance to the display edges. The closer you move the cursor crosshair to the edge of the screen/window, the faster Ecco will go. The left mouse button is for Dashing, the right for Sonaring. Mode 2 controls the speed with left mouse button clicking. Dashing is assigned to the middle mouse button.



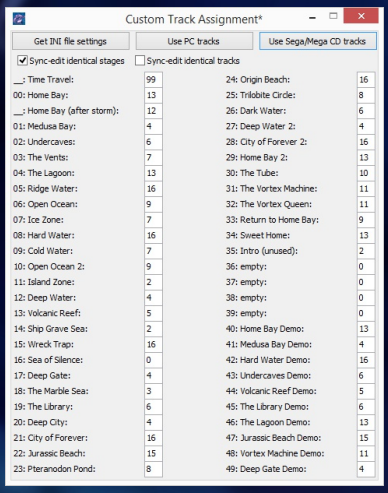


Custom Soundtracks

The *Ecco PC Launcher* adds functions to play MP3/OGG/WAV and other audio files from your hard drive. You can select from three *Track Assignment* options from the *Launcher settings*. The original *Ecco PC* release canned a few tracks due to the high data demand of the 3D rendered videos. As such limitations have vanished, we've changed back to the original SegaCD/MegaCD soundtrack to give you the full original soundtrack experience.



The *Custom track assignment* option lets you create and play custom soundtracks, e.g. using your personal music collection! Create a folder in the *ECCOPC* directory and add music to be played ingame. Tracks must begin with a running number to assign them to stages from the launcher menu. The easiest way to do this is by adding a number in front of every file name - e.g. "01 - TrackXY.mp3". Enter the folder as the *Music Folder* inside the launcher.



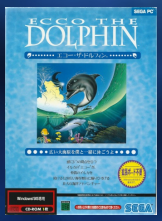
Now you need to assign the tracks to stages. Click the "..." button on the right hand of *Track Assignment* to open a new window with a list of all stages and music play situations in *Ecco PC*. Assign tracks to stages using the numbers you just added to your music files. You can also import *Track Assignments* of the original games to use their specific order as a start. When you are done assigning levels, close the window and save your settings. Settings are saved in a file called *EccoTracks.ini* inside your custom *Music Folder*. This allows for multiple great things:

- You can store and select from multiple soundtracks in your *ECCOPC* folder. When selecting a different *Music Folder*, the Launcher will automatically load the corresponding *EccoTracks.ini*.
- You can share your custom soundtracks with other people. Just send them the whole folder with the *EccoTracks.ini* and they'll be able to play with your custom soundtrack.

We've added the original MegaDrive/Genesis *Ecco the Dolphin* soundtrack, ripped by the *16bit Audiophile Project*. This allows you to experience the game with a high quality soundtrack recording from the original MegaDrive/Genesis version. Note: Also the sound effects in this *Ecco PC* release have been ripped by the *16bit Audiophile Project*!



Bonus Material



We've added some Bonus Material to this release. Browse through the folder to find some nice treats! Each folder contains a Readme file with more detailled information!

The Game Box Scans folder contains scans of the original Game Boxes, Manuals and several other things, for every known release of *Ecco PC*. The Readme lists up all the ingredient of the boxes.

The Music Tracks folder will give you some variations of the Time Travel music.

The Sprite Swap folder gives you alternate sets of Sprites you can copy over the original dolphin sprites in the game. Play the game with the original dolphin sprites from the *Ecco the Dolphin* console releases, or for fun, as Tara the Orca from *Ecco Jr.*!





Troubleshooting

Q: Why does the game crash when I try to run it (Game -> Go)?

A: The game's path length may be too long. Currently only path lengths <128 characters are supported. Make sure you use a short path name (like *C:\Games\ECCOPC*). Afterwards, make sure the *DATA* path is set right in the *Launcher Settings*.

Q: Why am I getting a Virus message when I try to open the launcher?

A: This software is 100% virus-free! The launcher is compressed and injects the patch file into *Ecco PC*'s process. That might lead some antivirus software to flag the launcher as suspicious. You can control the game files with online tools like *www.virustotal.com*

Q: The Help File won't open!

A: The .HLP file is not standardly supported in current Windows versions anymore. However, you can grab a download from the Microsoft website to open the old Help file format again. Search *www.microsoft.com* for *"Windows Help Program"* to find a download for your corresponding Windows version!



Credits & Acknowledgement

We'd like to thank Korama for creating this hack and extending *Ecco PC*'s lifespan for hopefully a couple more Windows releases! Also thanks so much for putting the word for us in your releases, Korama, it's well appreciated!

Lots of thanks go to Dren McDonald of *The String Arcade* for giving us permission to use an excerpt of their string quartet version *Echos of Ecco* for the time travel music. Please visit *www.thestringarcade.com* to find the full song and album with an amazing collection of videogame music played on strings!

Another huge thanks goes to the *16bit Audiophile Project* for letting us use their MegaDrive/Genesis soundtrack recordings of Ecco 1 and 2 and for recording the corresponding sound effects for us! Visit *www.16bitaudiophileproject.org* for more awesome 16bit soundtracks!

Thanks to everyone who put the word out for this release, especially *RadioSEGA* and *SEGAbits*, and those who tested the game for us. Also thanks to you for checking out the *Ecco PC fixed and enhanced Edition*, whether you are trying to play *Ecco PC* again or for the first time in your life! We hope you enjoy *Ecco PC* as much as we do!







