

**Documenting an inshore resident group of coastal bottlenose dolphins  
(*Tursiops truncatus*) in Virginia Beach, Virginia**

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The nearshore waters of Virginia are inhabited seasonally by coastal migratory bottlenose dolphins. Previous studies have shown that these dolphins move south at least to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina during winter months. Since 1996, we have documented over-wintering of coastal dolphins in a shallow-water bay in Virginia Beach. We believe these are the first recorded observations of year-round residency for coastal dolphins in Virginia waters. The resident group has grown from a single dolphin during the first winter to as many as eight dolphins in April 1999. We conducted routine surveys to document the number and condition of the dolphins as well as to monitor environmental conditions such as salinity and water temperature. We recorded water temperatures as low as 4.4°C and salinities below 10 ppt. Photo-identification has been used to record distinctive individuals in the resident group. The lone dolphin from the first winter gave birth to a calf in the summer of 1997. We believe there may be a second calf in the group born in the summer of 1998. To our knowledge, these dolphins have remained in the shallow-water bay since their arrival. The calves may have never been outside this enclosed area. Mild winter temperatures in recent years may have contributed to this recent shift in distribution. Whether these observations represent a northward extension of the traditional winter range of coastal resident bottlenose dolphins or are simply short-term changes involving a few isolated individuals remains to be seen.