

Presented by Mark Swingle as a talk at the Northeast Region Stranding Network Conference, Plymouth, MA, May 26-28, 1997

EXTRALIMITAL HABITATION OF A SHALLOW WATER BAY IN VIRGINIA BY A BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN, *TURSIOPS TRUNCATUS*.

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The near shore waters of Virginia are inhabited by coastal migratory bottlenose dolphins during the months of April to November. As water temperatures begin to drop each fall, these dolphins leave Virginia waters and apparently travel to areas south of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. During the period of October 1996 to May 1997, one bottlenose dolphin (VMSM 961071) remained in a shallow bay in the city of Virginia Beach, Virginia. The Virginia Marine Science Museum (VMSM) Stranding Center observed the condition and behavior of VMSM 961071 and monitored the water temperature in the bay throughout the period. The Stranding Center veterinarian and staff regularly observed the dolphin and judged its external condition and behavior to be normal. Water temperature in the bay dropped to a low of 6.0 C in February. This may be the first recorded winter survival of a coastal bottlenose dolphin in Virginia. Lone dolphins have been observed on at least two other occasions in this bay during winter months. On both occasions, the dolphins were captured and transported out of the bay. These captures were made at considerable costs and presumably were extremely stressful for the dolphins. The successful survival of VMSM 961071 may provide valuable information for future decisions regarding extralimital dolphins in Virginia.