

The Mortgage Shop Corporate Adoption Update – February 2006

Yesterday at North Kessock, just as the tide was rising, a familiar dorsal fin broke the surface of the calm, deep water and the “whuff” of a dolphin exhaling was heard. Freedom was in her own territory, her own back yard if you like. She has spent nearly all of her 12 years visiting this deep channel, this is where her mother, Kess, brought her up as a young calf and she knows every bit of seaweed and gravel like you know the back of your hand.

She was not alone yesterday morning; she was with two huge adults, one of whom was Sutor. Sutor is one of the old mature males, who appear to potter around making sure that the youngsters don't get into trouble. Just as I was setting up the camera and tripod, Freedom decides to swim far into the Firth out of sight leaving just the big adults within camera range. At minus 5 degrees, it was not a very nice morning to play a waiting game but I managed just over an hour before retreating to the car for some heat. This was the cue for Freedom to come rapidly back and race past me, chasing herring out of the Firth and towards the open sea. All I could do was watch as she vanished into the distance without getting so much as a fin shot!

The winter dispersal period is always a slightly worrying time for me, as I wonder just where certain dolphins are and what they are doing. Thankfully with Freedom I don't have to wait long before she turns up to let me know that she is okay. I normally see Freedom about once a week on average, she is one of the dolphins in this population that doesn't travel great distances and is what you would call a really “local” animal. She has a home range of around 20 miles, rarely straying further north than Balintore and further east than Nairn. Some dolphins like to travel away during the winter period and return for the spring and summer, but thankfully my favourite dolphin in this population is never far away to lighten up the dark winter months.

I hope that you like the photograph. It was taken last summer and Freedom, the dolphin on the right of the photo, is having a game of jumping with one of her associates, another animal around the same age called “Squat Fin” number 744.

Thank you once again for your continued vital support.

Very best wishes,

Charlie Phillips
WDCS Dolphin Field Officer

