

“Stumpy” the Norwegian orca is provisioned and accepted by no less than five groups of orca

Pages 48.49, extracted from:

Stenersen, J., and Similä, T (2004). Norwegian Killer Whales. Tringa forlag. ISBN: 8299457734. Pp 92.

"Stumpy"

The story of "Stumpy" is an example of the insight we can gain into the life of killer whales through long-term observations of known individuals.

"Stumpy" is a young killer whale who was born in 1995. He was first observed in Tysfjord in 1996, and he then had serious injuries to his spine and dorsal fin. He was in the company of his mother, and they were swimming close to the NE15 group, but the mother is not a member of that group.

We did not see "Stumpy" again for several years and assumed he had not survived his extensive injuries. Then, in 2002, he was suddenly back in Tysfjord. We now got more and better pictures of him and were able to see that his left side was badly damaged. He appeared to have been hit by a boat when he was a small calf.

We have several observations of "Stumpy" when he was 7-8 years old, and his behaviour tells us that he is not like other killer whales. A killer whale of that age is normally attached to its mother and its family group, but instead of swimming with his family, "Stumpy" swims with



The first photo of "Stumpy", from 1996.

a variety of groups. We have identified at least five different groups which have been looking after him. Both in 2002 and 2003, he was seen several times with the NE15 group, and it was particularly interesting that on those occasions he was accompanied by an adult male who did not belong to the group. It seems as though "Stumpy" feels a strong bond to the NE15 group, perhaps his own family group broke away from it. But why this adult male is with "Stumpy" when he is with the NE15 group is a mystery.

When the killer whales are feeding, "Stumpy" generally remains on the edge of the group. His deformed spine probably prevents him diving properly, but we have still not succeeded in obtaining observations and film of his movements under water. Even though he is unable to take part in pursuing herring, he obviously gets enough food. He probably eats some of the herring that have been stunned by the other animals in the group he is accompanying. There are also two observations of adults taking a herring to "Stumpy".

In addition to ensuring that "Stumpy" gets food, it is very obvious that the adults he is with protect him. It is not easy to get near him with a boat. One or two adult whales are generally between "Stumpy" and the boat, and on several occasions we have seen them push him away from boats, or swim up beside him and guide him away from them.

Since killer whales live in family groups with strong bonds between individuals, it is perhaps not so strange that "Stumpy" is looked after. Nevertheless, it is surprising that a disabled individual is being taken care of by several groups. Even though he was seen with his mother the first year, we do not know her identity, and consequently nor do we know which family group "Stumpy" originally belongs to.

It will be exciting to see what happens to him when he becomes sexually mature and an adult – whether he will still be looked after by others.



at least five different groups
in 2002 and 2003, he was seen
it was particularly interesting
led by an adult male who did
ough "Stumpy" feels a strong
family group broke away from
oy" when he is with the NE15

"Stumpy" generally remains on the
probably prevents him diving
in obtaining observations and
though he is unable to take
its enough food. He probably
stunned by the other animals
are also two observations of

s food, it is very obvious that
t easy to get near him with a
ly between "Stumpy" and the
en them push him away from
im away from them.

with strong bonds between
hat "Stumpy" is looked after.
led individual is being taken
he was seen with his mother
and consequently nor do we
ally belongs to.

m when he becomes sexually
be looked after by others.



*"Stumpy" with the NR group, resting while
the other animals are hunting.*

*"Stumpy" being led away by members of the
NR group.*