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LONE SOCIABLE BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN IN BRAZIL:  
HUMAN FATALITY AND MANAGEMENT

Lone, wild, and sociable bottlenose dolphins, *Tursiops truncatus*, have been described worldwide for many years (see Lockyer 1990, St. John 1991, Dudzinski *et al.* 1995). It is still not clear why these dolphins spontaneously seek human company (Lockyer 1990).

Beginning in March 1994, a lone dolphin was observed on a daily basis in the vicinity of the ferryboat pier at São Sebastião (23°48'S, 45°24'W), São Paulo State, Brazil. It was nicknamed "Tião." "Tião" was a 2.60-m male bottlenose dolphin with a deep, rounded wound on its lower jaw tip and an easily recognizable dorsal fin. For about five months, it was observed following the ferryboat and other small boats in the area. After this period it moved northwards to Caraguatatuba (23°37'S, 45°23'W). From August to December 1994, it interacted often with bathers. The bathers' behavior varied from simply touching the animal, to grabbing its fins, to hitting it and jumping on it. Some bathers even attempted to put ice-cream sticks into its blowhole. The dolphin reacted aggressively when repeatedly harrassed and injured about 29 bathers, who were sent to the hospital with minor injuries. On 8 December 1994, "Tião" struck a 30-year-old bather who died several hours later from internal bleeding due to a stomach rupture, according to "Casa de Saúde Stella Maris," the local hospital.

After the human fatality, a management program was planned by a team consisting of the author and members of a federal environmental agency (IBAMA), a non-governmental organization (FUNDAMAR), and the Prefecture of São Sebastião. The main goal of this program was to avoid more accidents during the summer season by focusing on (1) public education, (2) media control, and (3) prevention of "harmful" interactions between the dolphin and human beings. Team members worked daily from 0800 to 2000, from mid-December 1994 until mid-February 1995 monitoring "Tião" and the bathers. Brochures providing information about the dolphin and how to behave safely in its presence were distributed. When beaches were crowded and the dolphin appeared, swimmers were asked to leave the water. However, when the dolphin approached bathers before they could leave the water, the educational material warned against touching the dolphin's sensitive areas such as the blowhole, the genitals, and eyes. At night, free lectures about wild dolphins and "Tião" were presented to the public in general.

Perhaps as a result of this educational material, no more accidents were recorded. On January 1995 the dolphin returned to São Sebastião, where it was observed until August. Since then it has not been seen.

Because the sightings of this dolphin were preceded by the release of a captive dolphin about 600 km to the south in 1993, there has been speculation that "Tião's" attraction towards humans was due to a previous history in captivity. However, these dolphins were not the same individual because: (1) the captive dolphin had been freeze-branded with a Brazilian flag, a brand not observed on "Tião"; (2) at the same time that "Tião" was being sighted daily in São Sebastião, the former captive dolphin was being sighted 110 km to the south at São Vicente in May 1994, and 360 km to the south off the Paraná coast from July until October 1994, when it disappeared; (3) the former captive was 2.80 m long in 1993, while "Tião" was measured to be 20 cm shorter than this in 1994; and (4) close-up sightings of both dolphins and comparison of photographs of their dorsal fins by the author indicated that they were not the same individual.

Interactions between humans and wild dolphins may lead to unfortunate consequences for people and for dolphins. Because dolphins sometimes seek out humans,

regulations and guidelines to manage such situations are necessary to avoid injuries to humans and to dolphins.

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#### *STENELLA ATTENUATA* FROM CURAÇAO MISIDENTIFIED AS *S. COERULEOALBA*

Debrot and Barros (1994) reported the collection of the head of a juvenile striped dolphin, *Stenella coeruleoalba*, found floating at sea off St. Michielsbaai, Curaçao. The accompanying photograph showed a color pattern (no pronounced eye-to-anus stripe and indistinct flipper stripe) more like that of a spotted dolphin, *S. attenuata* or *S. frontalis*, than that of a striped dolphin, and re-examination of the skull (specimen ZMA24.595 at the Zoological Museum of Amsterdam) revealed characters that strengthened this impression (arcuate ramus and absence of palatal grooves—Perrin *et al.* 1981—and tooth counts at or below the known minima for *S. coeruleoalba* but within the ranges for *S. attenuata* and *S. frontalis*—Perrin and Hohn 1994; Perrin *et al.* 1994a,b). The two spotted species overlap in all cranial characters in the Caribbean (Perrin *et al.* 1987), precluding further identification of the juvenile specimen from skull measurements or tooth counts alone. Therefore, we decided to attempt an identification based on DNA sequence comparisons.

Using standard protocols, DNA was extracted from a small piece of dried tissue removed from the skull, and a 787-base-pair fragment of the mitochondrial cytochrome B gene was amplified using the polymerase chain reaction (PCR). Both strands of a 396-base-pair fragment in the middle of the gene were sequenced on an automated sequencer and compared to the same gene-segment from known specimens of the three