

**REVIEW OF THE OCCURRENCE AND MANAGEMENT OF *SOTALIA* BYCATCH
IN CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICAN COASTAL AND RIVERINE FISHERIES:
PRIORITIES FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION**

*Jaime Bolaños-Jiménez*¹, *Salvatore Siciliano*², *Alexandre N. Zerbin*³ and *Koen Van Waerebeek*⁴

Despite the fact that cetacean bycatch has been acknowledged as the “greatest immediate and well-documented threat to the survival of cetacean species and populations... .progress at reducing the scale and conservation impact of cetacean bycatch has been slow, sporadic, and limited to a few specific fisheries or circumstances “. In this paper, we 1) Review the occurrence of *Sotalia* bycatch all along its distribution area, 2) Examine how the problem has been addressed in some areas and 3) Outline some priority actions for conservation of the genus regarding management of bycatch issues. A recent review of cetacean bycatch in the Wider Caribbean Region indicates that mortality of *Sotalia* in fisheries-related operations with gillnets occurs in Colombia, French Guyana, Honduras, Surinam and Venezuela. Bycatch is also reported in Brazil, Nicaragua and Peru. Some mitigative measures including a ban on fisheries in protected areas, monitoring programs and field surveys for evaluation of bycatch have been made or are planned in Costa Rica and Venezuela. In Brazil, bycatch of *Sotalia* has been widely documented in coastal areas and also in the Amazon River Basin. In this country, an official action plan for the conservation of aquatic mammals includes specific recommendations to evaluate the impact of bycatch and to develop mitigative measures. According to recent statistics, most of cetacean bycatch worldwide occurs in gillnet fisheries. A precautionary approach suggests that – to protect *Sotalia* and other cetacean populations– these fisheries should be either regulated, monitored, limited or -in some instances – banned, taking into account that creative solutions should be provided by means of collaborative efforts between resource managers, fishermen, scientists and interested parties. On the other side, because of the socio-economic aspects involved in such a decision, appropriate alternatives and/or incentives as well as local characteristics of some fisheries must be properly considered.

**REVISIÓN DE LA OCURRENCIA Y MANEJO DE CAPTURAS INCIDENTALES DE *SOTALIA*
EN PESQUERÍAS COSTERAS Y FLUVIALES DE CENTRO Y SURAMÉRICA:
PRIORIDADES DE ACCIÓN INMEDIATA**

A pesar del hecho de que la captura incidental de cetáceos ha sido reconocida como la “más inmediata y bien documentada amenaza para la supervivencia de las poblaciones y especies de cetáceos... .el progreso para la reducción el impacto de estas capturas ha sido lento, esporádico y limitado a sólo unas cuantas

¹ *Sociedad Ecológica Venezolana Vida Marina (Sea Vida). A.P. 162, Cagua, Estado Aragua, Venezuela 2122. E-mail: megapterax@yahoo.com.*

² *Projeto de Monitoramento de Aves e Mamíferos Marinbos na Bacia de Campos / CENPES/PETROBRAS – Escola Nacional de Saúde Pública/FIOCRUZ. Rio de Janeiro, 21041-210 RJ Brazil.*

³ *Washington Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences, University of Washington. Box 355020, Seattle, WA 98195-5020, USA.*

⁴ *Centro Peruano de Estudios Cetológicos (CEPEC), Museo de Delfines. Pucusana, Lima 20, Perú.*