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Editorial

Miriam Marmontel
Editor-in-Chief
Instituto de Desenvolvimento Sustentável Mamirauá

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Dear LAJAM readership,

I would like to present you LAJAM 20(2), our second issue of the year. It comes full of information in the shape of six articles and one note about freshwater and marine mammals in South America, from Mexico to Brazil. We have contributions on all groups (Cetacea, Sirenia, Mustelidae, Pinnipedia), both dealing with live and dead animals, highlighting the relevance of mid- to long-term efforts, and the importance of beach monitoring programs.

Balsamo Dias et al. report seven species of pinnipeds (both otariids and phocids) recorded in the Brazilian state of São Paulo between 1981 and 2023, based on a beach monitoring program. Their highest number occurs during winter, when all of the taxa are represented, and the species most recorded are males, either immature South American fur seals or mature Subantarctic fur seals.

On another beach-monitoring effort, over a decade (2015-2024) Ballabio et al., also in São Paulo, analyzed seasonal distribution and population parameters of stranded specimens of franciscana dolphin in Franciscana Management Area IIa, concluding that approximately 60% of the total originated from bycatch.

Gallo-Reynoso and collaborators present us with seven cases of mysticetes preyed upon by killer whales in Mexico (Gulf of California) over 17 years, including one Bryde's, one gray, and seven fin whales. All animals showed signs of predation and were partially consumed, mostly skin, blubber and tongue.

The concentration of mercury in six Guiana dolphin (and fish) from Venezuela's Lake Maracaibo was the main subject of Briceño et al.'s paper, over 60% of those juvenile dolphins contained mercury levels in their soft tissues that exceeded the safe limit for human consumption. Even though only one of the species of fish presented similar results, authors call for comprehensive management strategies to reduce mercury pollution.

On more positive notes, Wallace and colleagues performed a Range Wide Priority Setting workshop, systematizing over 5,000 distribution points for giant otters throughout their current range, and updated the species historical range; 33 experts from at least 10 South American countries and abroad also identified 22 areas of greatest conservation importance for the species, providing recommendations for long-term conservation.

Off Ecuador, for the past 15 years, Felix and Haase have been monitoring humpback whales from land and boat bases, documenting a population increase, with a population estimated in over 27,000 whales in 2024, with an annual survival rate of 0.956 and estimated intrinsic population growth rate of 0.119. Recognizing the interanual variability in migration associated with the El Niño Southern Oscillation and increasing climate unpredictability, authors call for further analyses on these figures.

In a short note, yet very relevant contribution, Mignnucci-Giannoni and collaborators review 31 Greater Caribbean manatee records in the past eight years, in the British and US Virgin Islands (likely dispersing from Puerto Rico), which signals hope for a natural recolonization process in areas where manatees had been extirpated.

I wish you enjoy the papers herein contained. Happy reading!

Sincerely,

Miriam Marmontel
Editor-in-Chief