

Cetacean Society International***Whales Alive! - Vol. XVI No. 4 - October 2007***

Dolphins Killed in Brazil; You Can Help Stop It

By William Rossiter, CSI President

83 marine-tucuxi dolphins (*Sotalia guianensis*) were intentionally killed by Brazilian fishermen in mid-July, off the coast of Amapa state, close to where the Amazon River joins the Atlantic Ocean. Prohibited by a 1986 Brazilian law, similar killings are known to happen in many places in Brazil and around the world. What made this event different was that it was a government sting operation, and the video taken onboard was shown by Brazil's Globo TV, inflaming public outrage.

Most of the dolphins died by suffocation, while the fishermen laughed. Their purpose was to sell the dead dolphins' meat as bait for shark fishermen, with some sold to "satisfy some regional superstitions". The fishermen finally may be prosecuted, but until Sea Shepherd of Brazil began a legal suit to have their names released, IBAMA seemed unwilling to act as the law demanded, taking a very long time to establish the identities of the men from the videotape, even though an IBAMA agent had worked with them on the boat. Some reports suggest the responsible courts are not enthusiastic about prosecuting the fishermen, and there are hints of violent reprisals to anyone involved with punishing them.

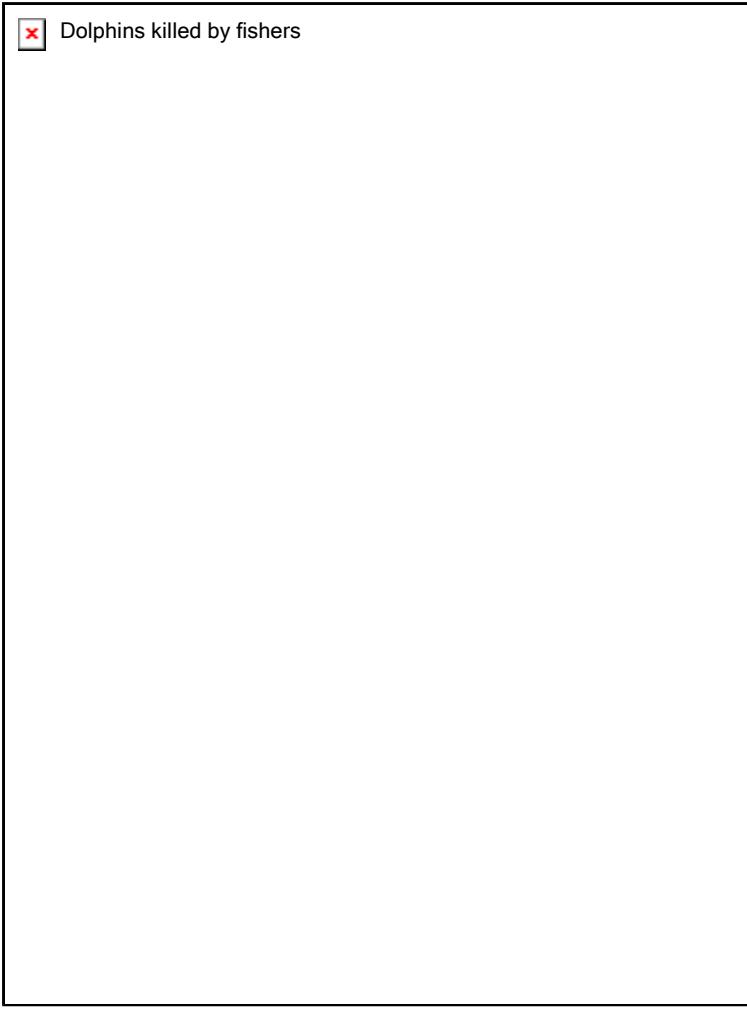
The video was part of the sting operation by IBAMA, Brazil's environmental protection agency, which included the active participation of an IBAMA agent and a scientist who was using the dead dolphins for research. After the event Brazil published Normative Instruction no. 166/2007, trying to limit similar directed takes and incidental captures, by restricting driftnet fisheries to certain net sizes and sets, creating exclusion zones, and eliminating the surface driftnet fishery over the next two years. There will be several associated workshops and meetings to monitor the effort to limit such killings, and many scientists CSI has known and helped will be part of the process.

One immediate concern echoed by many of these CSI friends was about the lethargy of Brazil's bureaucracy. Faith in the government agencies is dismal. The few fishermen caught in this sting represent many more who carry on the killing, and they all know and laugh about the laws. What they know best is that ineffective enforcement will keep them safe from the law.

One immediate consequence of widespread professional concern was the call from scientists as well as NGOs for better monitoring and enforcement. Few believe any longer that public education programs can stem the killing; direct action is required. Recognizing that there was virtually no economic incentive for the government to act, and a great deal of inertia against action, they are now calling upon international organizations and activists to pressure the government to enforce the law. That's where you and CSI come in.

One immediate response CSI had was about the ethics of scientists participating by doing research while the sting was gathering evidence. CSI continually provides grants to research projects that make opportunistic use of cetaceans that die by human or natural causes,

because many things can be learned from this research, and it must continue. But CSI does not support projects that are even invasive, much less harmful. The IBAMA scientist was there as part of the sting, but it is not clear if that was to lessen suspicions or to take advantage of something that would happen anyway. Other scientists researched the dead dolphins during the period of the sting. We wondered if the killing fishermen knew about that, assumed that the scientists were only interested in specimens, and did not care about the killing or the law breaking. From that we wonder if Brazilian fishermen consider scientists possible threats, by reporting illegal activities, or semi-partners, by willingly making use of the killed dolphins.



**While it is one thing for fishers to kill dolphins accidentally, as here,
and another to kill them intentionally, both must stop.**

Photo courtesy Marcos Santos.

Ethical questions are everywhere in science today, and most enlightened conferences and meetings include the subject. The question we want them to ask at the next opportunity is this: Is it unethical for a scientist to participate even peripherally in an inhumane, unethical or illegal act carried out by others, by making use of whatever the others do? The answer has nothing to do with the expediency or significance of the research, or the fact the animals would be dead anyway. We would expect a wide range of opinions, and hope for a trend towards more humane rather than more efficient.

Regarding efforts to get Brazil's officials moving to prevent more illegal killings, one of the most impressive has come from Aline Holt, a Brazilian marine biologist and Ph.D. student at

the University of Brighton, UK. Here's what she suggests you can do to help, and we hope you do:

First, go to: <http://www.PetitionOnline.com/tucuxi07> and sign the petition. Join thousands of people and organizations worldwide and help Brazil's dolphins.

Next, using organizational letterhead if possible, take a few minutes to write directly to:

(1) President of the Republic of Brazil:

President Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva,
Palácio do Planalto, 4º andar - sala 37,
Praça dos Três Poderes, Brasília - DF CEP 70150-901,
Brazil

pr@planalto.gov.br

and send copies to:

(2) Presidency Office Chief:

Mr. Fernando de Lima Santos,
fernandols@planalto.gov.br

(3) President of IBAMA (Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources):

Mr. Bazileu Alves Margarido Neto,
Setor de Clubes Esportivo Norte - SCEN,
Trecho 2, Ed. Sede do IBAMA, Bloco "A",
Brasília - DF CEP 70818-900

Brazil

bazileu.margarido@ibama.gov.br

(4) IBAMA's Regional Office in Amapá, Director:

Mr. Edivan Barros de Andrade,
ESCRITÓRIO REGIONAL DE AMAPÁ,
AV. FAB, Nº 293, CENTRO, Amapá CEP: 68.950-000,
Brazil

edivan.andrade@ibama.gov.br

(5) Ministry of the Environment,

Minister Mrs. Marina Silva,
Esplanada dos Mnístérios, Bloco B,
Brasília - DF CEP 70068-900,
Brazil

marina.silva@mma.gov.br

(6) Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, President:

Dep. Arlindo Chinaglia,
Gabinete 706 - Anexo IV, Câmara dos Deputados,
Praça dos Três Poderes, Brasília - DF CEP: 70160-900,
Brazil

dep.arlindochinaglia@camara.gov.br

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