

On the occurrence of the Common Dolphin, *Delphinus delphis*,
and the Spinner Dolphin, *Stenella longirostris*,
off the coast of Venezuela

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In the scope of his work on marine ornithology for the C.I.C.A.R. project (Cooperative Investigations of the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions) the first author of this note visited the village Robledas on the Isla de Margarita (about 11° N, 64° 20' W) on October 10, 1971. On the beach near the village he found the mutilated upper part of the skull of a dolphin. Although the mandibles were lacking and half of the rostrum was broken off, the skull could still be identified by the deep lateral grooves in the palate and the dorsally fused premaxillae. Without any doubt the skull was that of a Common Dolphin, *Delphinus delphis* LINNAEUS, 1758.

On November 20, 1971, the small island of Barlovento of the Islas Las Aves archipelago (about 12° N, 67° 30' W) (east of Bonaire) was also visited and near a fisherman's camp another calvarium of a dolphin was found. This calvarium, showing 50-50 alveoli, had a long and slender rostrum (see table I), of which the ventral aspect, except for two very shallow palatine grooves, was smooth. This skull was clearly that of a Spinner Dolphin, *Stenella longirostris* [GRAY, 1828]. Although it must have been an adult specimen, in view of the size of the supraoccipital crest, the premaxillae were not fused dorsally as is so often the case in this species [VAN BREE, 1971: 105].

Delphinus delphis may be a common species in the Gulf of Mexico and in the Caribbean, but published faunistic records are scarce. Specimens are known from the Bahama Islands [TRUE, 1889: 57] from the northwestern part of the area mentioned and from Jamaica [TRUE, 1889: 56]. CALDWELL [1955: 470] recorded *Delphinus delphis* from the Gulf of Mexico (27° 00' N, 92° 00' W) and ERDMAN [1970: 683] reported the occurrence of the species at 20 km west of Antigua and at 250 km northeast of Cayenne.

Finds of *Stenella longirostris* in the western half of the North-Atlantic are also rather rare. MOORE [1953: 132] recorded the species west of the Bahamas off Turtle Rocks. LAINE [1965: 159-165] published a note on some specimens found stranded at Dog Island, about 4 miles off the coast of Florida and CALDWELL et al. [1971: 305] described Spinner Dolphins caught by fishermen from St. Vincent.

The finds of the two skulls on islands off the Venezuelan coast can be correlated with sightings of the two species in the southeastern Caribbean, recorded during the periods the junior author spent at sea. His sight-records as well as those of other zoologists working for the C. I. C. A. R. project still have to be worked out.

Table I. Dimensions of two calvaria of dolphins found on islands off the coast of Venezuela; for further particulars, see text.

	<i>D. delphis</i> ZMA 15.137 mm	<i>S. longirostris</i> ZMA 15.138 mm	%
Total length of skull	—	420	100.0
Rostrum length	—	267	63.6
Rostrum basal width	82	74	17.6
Rostrum, width 60 mm anterior to base	—	50	11.9
Rostrum, width at its middle	—	42	10.0
Rostrum, width at $\frac{3}{4}$ of its length	—	30	7.1
Breadth across pre-orbital angles of supra-orbital processes	150	143	34.0
Breadth across post-orbital angles of supra-orbital processes	169	—	—
Zygomatic width	166	—	—
Width of braincase across parietals	132	135	32.1
Maximum width of premaxillae	67	66	15.7
Length temporal fossa	57	51	12.1
Height temporal fossa	48	43	10.2
Tip rostrum - nares	—	307	73.1
Length of upper toothrow (right side)	—	233	55.5
Length of upper toothrow (left side)	—	222	52.8
Number of alveoli (upper)	—	48(+2)—50	

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