

NOTA CIENTÍFICA

ACCIDENTAL CAPTURE OF THE PANTROPICAL SPOTTED DOLPHIN *Stenella attenuata* (GRAY, 1846) (DELPHINIDAE) IN THE SOUTHWESTERN SOUTH ATLANTIC OCEAN.

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The pantropical spotted dolphin, *Stenella attenuata*, was redescribed by PERRIN et al. (1987). However the taxonomic status still calls for attention, because there is a great geographic variation in the species. In the Southwestern South Atlantic Ocean the species is known in very few places (PERRIN, HOHN, 1994) and the records should be thoroughly reevaluated. In the redescription of the species, PERRIN et al. (1987) included specimens from Southern Brazil (MCNRS 026 – Museu de Ciências Naturais da Fundação Zoobotânica, Porto Alegre, RS, Brasil) and Argentina (MACNBA 23-46 – Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales “Bernardino Rivadavia”, Buenos Aires, Argentina) without direct examination. The individual collected by Zwenegon in Torres, Brazil (MCNRS 026) was initially mentioned as *S. cfr. plagiodon* (PINEDO, CASTELLO, 1980) and later as *S. attenuata* (PINEDO et al. 1992). Finally, this specimen was reidentified as *Delphinus delphis* by SIMÕES-LOPES, XIMENEZ (1993).

On August 28, 1995, at about 04:00 hours, three spotted dolphins were simultaneously surrounded by a purse seine (765 meters long; 85 meters height; 12 mm mesh size) used for “cavalinha”, *Scomber japonicus* (Scombridae). Two animals managed to escape swimming near the surface

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before the final closing of the net. One of the dolphins was accidentally captured. This individual was 1.72m long. It was not entangled in the net and the probable cause of death was by suffocation under the mass of the catch (7 ton). This event occurred approximately 180km offshore in the State of São Paulo (25°31'66" S and 47° 49'42" W) at a depth of 31 meters. The specimen was photographed onboard and soon thrown overboard. This animal was heavily spotted, the spots being largely confluent or fused, particularly at the ventral margin of the dorsal cape; the white spotting was extensive to the fin (Fig. 1). The dorsal cape was continuous, unincised by a spinal blaze below the dorsal fin and the edge of the entire gapes (lips) was white. These are diagnostic characters for *S. attenuata* and differ in *S. frontalis*. In this last species the spinal blaze is clearly visible even in heavily spotted specimens (PERRIN et al., 1994). The present report places the pantropical spotted dolphin in the roster of the species that are being negatively impacted by fishing in the Southwestern Atlantic and reasserts the urgent need for further studies of the pelagic cetacean fauna of this realm.

LITERATURE CITED

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Fig. 1. Pantropical spotted dolphin *Stenella attenuata* (Delphinidae) accidentally captured by a purse seine net in the State of São Paulo (25°31'66" S and 47°49'42" W).