

## Marine mammals in French Guiana : current state of knowledge and conservation stakes

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State of knowledge on marine mammals living in French Guiana waters remains sketchy in front of the diversity revealed by recent studies. An aerial survey conducted in 2008 in the framework of the REMMOA program (Marine Mammals and Megafauna Monitoring by Aerial Observation), observations within oil explorations and a very recent work (2012) on pelagic fauna inventory attested the presence of 15 species of cetacean in the exclusive economic zone of French Guiana and highlighted high densities of small delphinids on the continental shelf and slope. These studies also confirmed the regular attendance of 2 threatened species, the sperm whale and the fin whale, sighted on the continental slope and oceanic waters. Two coastal species present high conservation stakes in French Guiana: the Guiana dolphin (*Sotalia guianensis*), an endemic species to north-eastern Latin America and the West Indian manatee (*Trichechus manatus*), a discrete sirenian sighted on most of estuaries and rivers of French Guiana but also at some coastal points.

If the level of knowledge on marine mammals in French Guiana is still fragmented, threats and pressures they are facing are well identified: accidental captures through legal and illegal fishing, potential contamination by heavy metal and organic pollutants, acoustic pollution related to oil exploration activities, habitat degradation...

Increase knowledge on marine mammals, from a biological and an ecological point of view, is crucial to better address the threats these species are facing and then develop adapted conservation plans to protect populations.