

## FIRST RECORD OF THE DWARF SPERM WHALE (*KOGIA SIMA*) IN CARIBBEAN WATERS OF COSTA RICA<sup>1</sup>

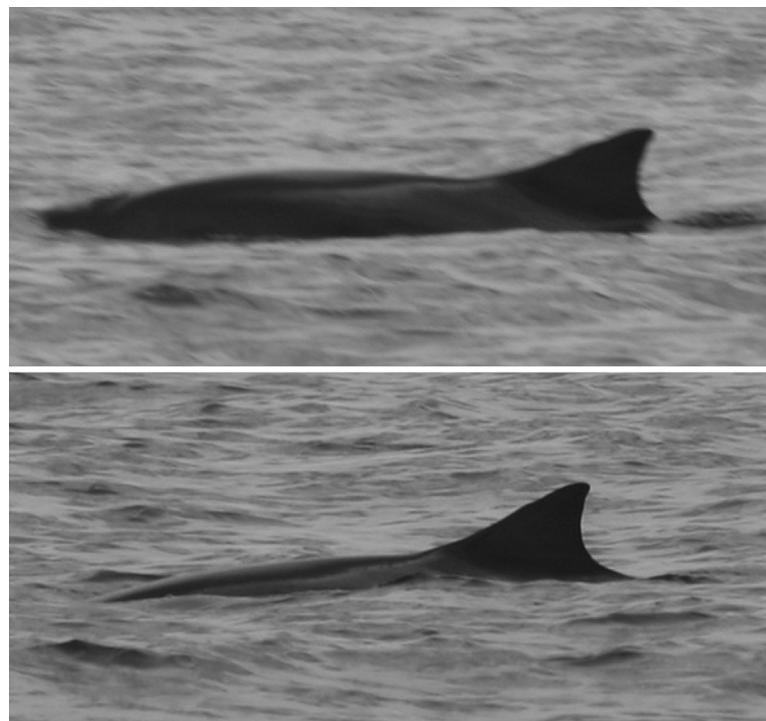
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Here I report the first record of the dwarf sperm whale for the Caribbean of Costa Rica, based on a sighting supported by photographic documentation. The sighting, made from a local boat as part of a survey undertaken to monitor coastal cetaceans in the Gandoca-Manzanillo Wildlife Reserve, occurred on 6 June 2006 at 9°39'N, 82°34'W, 6.1km east from Punta Mona, in 200m depth. One animal, presumably an adult, was observed motionless for four minutes at the surface (Fig. 1A). The animal performed three shallow dives before performing a long dive. During this time, I was able to observe the whale's dorsum, dorsal fin and its head as its snout was raised to breathe. Species identification was based on shape of the head (squarish head typical of *Kogia* spp.), and the shape of the dorsal fin. The latter allowed me to differentiate the specimen from the pygmy sperm whale (*K. breviceps*, de Blainville 1838) (Fig.1B).

The available information on the distribution of *K. sima* in the Caribbean shows a gap along Central America from Belize to Panama, mostly due to a lack of survey effort in deep waters (Cardona-Maldonado and Mignucci-Giannoni 1999, Ward *et al.* 2001). This new distribution record is a step forward in the species' baseline knowledge for the Wider Caribbean, which in turn might assist in future marine management decisions.

### Acknowledgments

I thank Laura May-Collado, Damian Martinez (Fundación Keto) and Evi Taubitz (Rostock University) for equipment and logistics support. I also thank the captain Dennis Lucas 'Bacalao' from Manzanillo. This study was carried out with permission from the Environmental Ministry (137-2005 SINAC, to L. May-Collado) and the National Park System, Área de



**Figure 1.** Photographs of a dwarf sperm whale (*K. sima*) sighted on 6 June 2006 in Caribbean waters of southern Costa Rica, showing the distinctive dorsal fin.

Conservación Talamanca, Costa Rica. Special thanks to Andrea Montero-Cordero, Laura May-Collado, Daniel Palacios and other anonymous reviewers for valuable comments and corrections to the manuscript.

### References

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<sup>1</sup> Received on 23 September 2008. Accepted on 14 December 2009. Managed by Nélio Barros / Daniel Palacios.

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