



## Editorial: Our State of the Union

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Dear readers

We are approaching the end of the year and are proud to bring to you LAJAM 12(1-2) which includes works on marine mammals, freshwater dolphins, manatees, and elephant seals, spanning a range from Argentina to Puerto Rico. Vermeulen *et al.* offer us a review on the distribution, abundance and population structure, among other parameters, of coastal bottlenose dolphins in Argentina, amassed from published and unpublished data as well as grey literature; authors report a low total abundance with a concerning declining trend over the past three decades. Aliaga-Rossel and Guizada describe seasonal distribution patterns of bufeo (which by the way graces our cover), generated from distribution surveys in five tributaries of the Iténez river, in the northern Bolivian department of Beni. This dolphin has been recognized as a separate species from the Amazon dolphin, and although recognized as such by SMM's Committee on Taxonomy in 2016 (<https://www.marinemammalscience.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Society-for-Marine-Mammalogy-List-2016-05-12.pdf>), now is not officially considered so. That, along with the not-yet-officially recognized Araguaian dolphin, points to the urgent need of taxonomic review and assessment of conservation status of the genus *Inia*. Sighting rates of marine mammals were also described off the coast of Ecuador by O'Hern and colleagues, who compared them to evaluate the use of different types of platforms of opportunity; they also describe the effect of geographical features and methodological aspects onto abundance estimates. Pizarro reports on the stranding of a sperm whale in southern Peru and reviews other recent strandings of the species in the country. Repeated sightings over four and a half years of a Southern elephant seal in Brazil's southeast coast, and its behavior and health over time is the subject of a note by Mayorga *et al.* The other three papers deal with aspects of manatee biology. Carvalho and colleagues and Harms Tuohy *et al.* describe encounters with Amazonian (in Peru) and Antillean (in Puerto Rico) manatee mating herds, respectively, the former of an observational nature and the latter a very close encounter with aggressive tones. Landeo-Yauri *et al.* tracked rehabilitated and released Amazonian manatees in Peru as well, for three months and present data on the animals' movements and habitat use during this immediate post-release period.

The year of 2017 is ending with worrisome news for Guiana dolphins: an unusually mortality event, identified as caused by morbillivirus took a toll of over 150 dolphins in Sepetiba Bay (Rio de Janeiro) in a months' period. This is likely the first UME recorded in Brazil, but a few other events have been reported for Chile and Argentina since 1977, the latest the one involving 343 sei whales in the Golfo de Penas (Chile). We all should take this as an alert to keep a careful eye on mortality events, and should feel stimulated to attempt to determine baseline health parameters for populations of our target species. With climate change and environmental alterations, such as pollution, everywhere we are likely to see these kinds of events more often from now on.

Speaking about challenges we should recognize that we have had difficulty this year to produce two separate issues for the 12<sup>th</sup> volume (and therefore we are only producing one volume including two issues), much associated to difficulty in engaging editors or reviewers to help us out in the process of editing a manuscript. This in fact is not a new issue, but has been pointed out a few years back by our previous chief editor, Daniel Palacios [LAJAM 7(1-2) 2009]. Some may not have received our messages because they went into the spam box, so I ask you all please to alert your systems that the lajam.org email is valid and important to look at, should not go to spam! Having said that I would like to congratulate our authors in 2017 and wholeheartedly thank those reviewers and editors who contributed time from their busy schedules to help us with the editing process.

The good news is that we have a date for the 18<sup>th</sup> RT and XII Congreso (Workshop and Congress) of the Latin American Society of Aquatic Mammals, to take place in beautiful and world-renowned culinary capital of Peru, Lima, with the help of a great team of students and professionals that are bringing back Peru into our meetings after a few years of absence. I encourage all to take part in the meeting and pre-event workshops, and later to submit manuscripts of the papers presented at the meeting to your very own journal, LAJAM. The editorial committee would also like you to know that we are reviewing the submission guidelines to make it more modern and streamlined, and that during 2018 we should move into 'online first' publishing. Meanwhile, we are accepting submissions for LAJAM 13(1) 2018. Enjoy!