

Amazon River Dolphin (*Inia*) Preys on Turtle (*Podocnemis*)

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Little is known of the food habits of the Amazon river dolphin or boto (*Inia geoffrensis*) the cited foods being principally fish («piranhas», *Prochilodus* sp., *Phractocephalus hemiliopterus*, «characids» and the crab, *Poppiana argentinianus* (CABRERA and YEPES, 1940; CARVALHO, 1961; LAYNE, 1958; PILLERI, 1969, 1972; TREBBAU and VAN BREE, 1974).

We recently had the opportunity to examine the stomach contents of a male *Inia* (209 cm, 118 kg) from Lago Amanã, Rio Japurá (2°30' S, 64°30' W) that had become entangled in a fisherman's gill net. The stomach was almost empty, 0.5 kg, and contained an immature river turtle (*Podocnemis sextuberculata*)* which was approximately 7 cm in length (Fig. 1). Adults of this turtle species are between 25–34 cm in length (unpublished data, Mittermeier, 1978). In addition to the turtle, there were a number of fish in various stages of digestion. These were identified (Table 1) using distinctive spines, dentition and otoliths (FITCH and BROWNELL, 1970). The fish consumed by this individual represent 9 families and approximately 11 species, an amazing diversity in comparison with temperate marine dolphins that may feed on up to 7 families and about 5–9 species in a life-time (MOREJOHN, 1979; SCHEFFER, 1953; SMITH and GASKIN, 1974).

Our observation of a fresh-water dolphin preying on a chelonian probably represents the first record of such an occurrence. A careful review of the extant literature on Amazonian river turtles mention only birds, reptiles and fish as predators (Table 2), principally on the hatchlings. We do not believe that *Inia* is a systematic predator of turtles as we have examined the stomach contents of other dolphins and have never before encountered turtle remains. Local fishermen also have no knowledge of this occurrence. Our finding of the turtle and PILLERI's (1972) report of crabs in the stomach contents of *Inia* suggest that this dolphin is an opportunistic predator. We are continuing to study the food habits of the dolphins *Inia* and *Sotalia* in relation to the fish resources in the Amazon basin.

* Deposited in the Zoology Museum of the University of São Paulo (MZ USP- 3033).

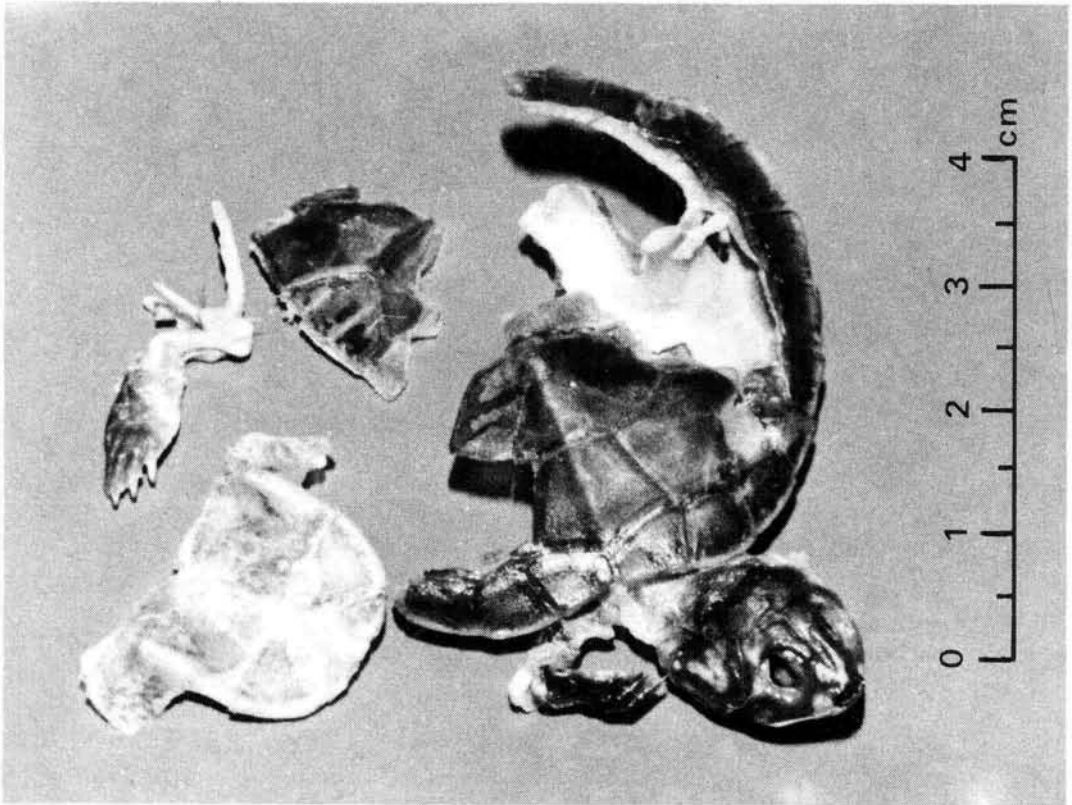


Figure 1. The remains of a young Amazon river turtle, *Podocnemis sextuberculata*, found in the stomach contents of a river dolphin *Inia geoffrensis*.

Table 1: Fish in the stomach contents of *Inia*

Family ¹	Species	Common name	Individuals represented
Anostomidae	<i>Laemolita varia</i>	head stander	1
Curimatidae	<i>Potamorhina pristigaster</i>	curimata	1
Cichlidae	<i>Crenicichla lugubris</i>	pike cichlid	1
Doradidae	(unidentified)	spiny catfish	2
Erytrinae	<i>Hoplias malabaricus</i>	giant trahira	1
Hypophthalmidae	<i>Hypophthalmus perporosus</i>	mapará	1
Pimelodiade	<i>Brachyplatistoma filamentosum</i>	filhote	1
Scianidae	<i>Plagioscion</i> sp.	croaker.or drum	2
	(unidentified sp.)		2
Serrasalminae	<i>Serrasalmus (Prystobrycon)</i> sp.	piranha	1
	<i>Metynis</i> sp.	pacu or silver dollar	1

¹ We have followed GERY (1977) and GOLDSTEIN (1973) for identification of characids and cichlids.

Table 2: Predators of Amazon river turtles (*Podocnemis* spp.).

Predator	Reference
<i>Pisces</i>	
unidentified	ALFINITO, 1975
piranhas (<i>Serrasalmus</i> spp.)	ALHO <i>et al.</i> , 1979; MITTERMEIER, 1978; PEREIRA, 1958.
catfish	ALHO <i>et al.</i> , 1979; MITTERMEIER, 1978; PEREIRA, 1958.
arawana (<i>Osteoglossum bicirrhosum</i>)	ALHO <i>et al.</i> , 1979.
trahira (<i>Hoplias</i> sp.)	ALHO <i>et al.</i> , 1979.
peacock cichlid (<i>Cichlus</i> sp.)	ALHO <i>et al.</i> , 1979.
<i>Amphibia</i>	
toad (<i>Bufo</i> sp.)	ALHO <i>et al.</i> , 1979.
<i>Reptiles</i>	
unidentified	ALFINITO, 1975.
Caimans (<i>Caiman crocodilus</i> and <i>Melanosuchus niger</i>)	MITTERMEIER, 1978; PEREIRA, 1958.
<i>Aves</i>	
unidentified raptors	PEREIRA, 1958.
vultures (<i>Coragyps atratus</i> and <i>Cathartes aura</i>)	ALFINITO, 1975; ALHO <i>et al.</i> 1979; MITTERMEIER, 1978.
cara-cara (<i>Caracara planais</i>)	MITTERMEIER, 1978.
terns (<i>Phaetusa simplex</i>)	ALFINITO, 1975; ALHO <i>et al.</i> 1979.
herons and storks (<i>Jabiru mycteria</i> , <i>Euxenura maguari</i> , <i>Ardea herodias</i>)	ALHO <i>et al.</i> 1979; MITTERMEIER, 1978.
<i>Mammalia</i>	
Amazon river dolphin (<i>Inia geoffrensis</i>)	this study

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