

PhD Dissertation Defense

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Title: Is Dolphin-Watching Sustainable In Bocas Del Toro, Panama?

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ABSTRACT

Due to concerns of unsustainable dolphin-watching tourism in Bocas del Toro and the increase in dolphin mortality in Bocas due to dolphin-watching boat collisions, research was conducted in the summer of 2013 to evaluate the severity of the situation, and to assess the tourists and boat operators' level of concern for dolphin and environmental conservation. This project examines whether dolphin-watching was negatively disrupting dolphin behaviors, and whether dolphin-watching operators were following Panama's dolphin-watching regulations. This project provides informative data to assist with the establishment of more stringent dolphin-watching management and enforcement, and it is hoped that it will assist with the establishment of Marine Protected Areas that include important habitat for the bottlenose dolphin population in Bocas del Toro.