

**BOTTLENOSE DOLPHINS IN THE EL PALMAR AND RIO LAGARTOS  
RESERVES, YUCATAN (MEXICO)**

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During the months of July-August in 1994, 1995 and 1996, diurnal surveys were carried out to collect information on bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) in the coastal waters of El Palmar and Rio Lagartos Reserves, located respectively on the northwest and north coast of the Yucatan Peninsula (Mexico). Observations were taken from the coast (El Palmar) and a pier situated in the small village of Las Coloradas (Rio Lagartos). A total of 78 days were spent in the field, totaling 236 hours of observations. Twenty-five hours were spent collecting data on a total of 79 schools. Dolphin schools were observed on 75.6% of all surveys days. Uninterrupted observations (“sightings”) averaged 19 min (SD=13.04, SE=1.46, N=79, range 3-69 min). Mean group size was 2.9 individuals (SD=1.72, SE=0.18). Behavioral data sampling followed Shane (1990): focal group activities were continuously observed, and their behavioral state recorded every 3 min. Behavior was classified according to eight broad categories: 1) travel; 2) dive-travel; 3) dive; 4) feed; 5) following a trawling fishing boat; 6) socialize; 7) social-travel; 8) milling. The overall proportion of time spent in each of the 8 behavior states was registered as well as the route of each group, the group formation and the presence of birds associated. The major part (49.5%) of all dolphin activity was observed within 20 and 100 m from the coast. This study provides needed data on the population dynamics of bottlenose dolphins within these previously unstudied areas.