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**POSTER**

**Competition between the two top predators *Inia geoffrensis humboldtiana* and *Crocodylus intermedius* in the Caño Guaritico, Venezuela: preliminary findings**

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The two top predators of the Orinoco and its afluent are the Orinoco river dolphin (*Inia geoffrensis humboldtiana*, de Blainville, 1817) and the Orinoco crocodile (*Crocodylus intermedius*, Graves, 1819). However, the latter –with up to 5 m length the largest predator of the South American continent- has become extinct over almost its entire original distribution range. Recovery Captive Breeding Programs for the reproduction and release back into the wild of Orinoco crocodiles are under way since several decades. Since 1987, the Caño Guaritico, a protected affluent of the Rio Apure, has been chosen for the release of more than 1800 juvenile crocodiles. It is known that today, the Caño Guaritico is one of the few rivers in Venezuela where Orinoco crocodiles do occur. The occurrence of Orinoco river dolphins in the same river is well known from the past, but recent data were not available. In November 2005, the authors organised an expedition to the Caño Guaritico to establish the presence and abundance of river dolphins in the light of the potential competition of the two top predators for food and a potential direct predation pressure of the crocodiles on neonate and juvenile river dolphins. Sightings of river dolphins from the mouth of the Caño Guaritico (with the Rio Apure) for several kilometers upstream were recorded in a systematic manner and did prove the current abundance of river dolphins in this area. Our findings are discussed in light of the known distribution of crocodiles in this river.

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