

Live-Capture of Cetaceans for European Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This review covers all small cetaceans that have been live-captured for European institutions. Most of the information is for the last twenty years although some earlier data are included. For at least 40 institutions in 13 European countries, a minimum of 393 dolphins (including 67 released) have been live-captured, while 16 animals were born in captivity. These include 5 *Inia geoffrensis*; 13 *Platanista indi*; 11 *Steno bredanensis*; 82 *Sotalia fluviatilis*; 213 *Tursiops truncatus* (incl. 15 captive born); 25 *Delphinus delphis*; 6 *Lagenorhynchus obscurus*; 20 *Cephalorhynchus commersonii*; 11 *Orcinus orca*; at least 2 *Phocoena phocoena* (incl. 1 captive born); 5 *Delphinapterus leucas*; and an unknown number of *Globicephala melaena* from the last century. Details on sex, age, collection date and locality are given when available, as well as longevity in captivity. However, the results are thought to be very incomplete (up to 50%) as many of the information request forms were either not returned or provided only limited data.

INTRODUCTION

Small cetaceans have been held in captivity in Europe since the middle of the last century although in the early years the aquaria were not specially equipped for marine mammals and most of the animals involved were incidental captures from the European coast. Nowadays several species from all over the world are live-captured for European institutions. As data on the catching localities are lacking for many of the animals held in Europe, this review covers all animals held in European institutions and not simply those captured in European waters. In the Results and Discussion section, only information received is commented on, e.g. if there is no information on the current status of animals known to have been held, then no comment at all is included.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In 1983, facilities for holding live dolphins exist in at least 40 institutions in Europe, mainly zoos and oceanariums but also a few institutes which from time to time keep animals for research. About ten other institutions have at some time kept dolphins although the facilities no longer exist (Defran and Pryor, 1980). All of these, and additionally other relevant individuals (e.g. veterinarians, research workers, curators) were asked to provide for each animal currently or previously held, information on: species; sex; length; approximate age; date, locality and method of capture; collector; and present status. More than half the sixty or so information request forms sent were not returned, and only 40% of those returned provided some (often incomplete) data. It is known that there are several travelling zoos with dolphins in eastern and southern Europe but it proved impossible to contact these. In addition to the information obtained from forms and telephone calls, a literature search was carried out. Although some data were obtained for as far back as the last century, most of the results presented are for animals held since the early 1970s.

This review attempts to cover all animals live-captured for Europe, including those which died during capture attempts or transport. Animals said to have been released during catching operations or within one year of capture

are reported in the species accounts below, since at least some of these are known to have been released in very poor condition and are unlikely to have survived. Incidental captures or stranded specimens are not considered in this review (although see the section on *Platanista indi*).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 summarises the available information on numbers of institutions and dolphins (including those born in captivity and those reported as released) for the thirteen European countries in which marine mammal facilities are known to exist. At least 393 dolphins (including 67 released) have been live-captured for European institutions (where 16 animals have also been born in captivity), but this is known to be a considerable underestimate (possibly by as much as 50%) for the following reasons:

- (i) the initial listing of institutions was incomplete (e.g. travelling zoos);
- (ii) not all contacted institutions replied;
- (iii) often the data from the institutions which did reply were incomplete.

For similar reasons it has not been possible to provide detailed information on each of the animals known to have been held.

A systematic review of the live capture fishery for European institutions is given below.

Inia geoffrensis, *boutu*

Ostenrath (1976) reported that five *boutu* were captured on behalf of the Duisburg Zoo (FRG) in January 1975, from the Rio Apure near San Fernando de Apure, Venezuela. They comprised two female (one lactating, one albino adult) and three male (one adult, one calf and one juvenile) animals (Pilleri *et al.*, 1979). Only the two young males are still alive.

Platanista indi, *Indus susu*

Several expeditions to India for living animals of this species were mounted by the Brain Anatomy Institute of the University of Berne, Switzerland. Unfortunately it is not possible to accurately reconstruct the total number of

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