

## Project Update: July 2008

Biologist Jaime Bolaños and his team worked to empower local communities in Ocumare de la Costa de Oro regarding responsible whale-watching. Activities included lectures at local schools; training seminars; advising undergraduate and graduate students in Tourism; advising local educators in Tourism; participation in regional science and technology meetings; and participation in field trips to sensitize students on the importance of local marine-coastal ecosystems. A result of these activities is that the local community and stakeholders can count on a better foundation to environmentally-responsible dolphin-watching tours for visitors.

Highlights included:

- Lectures on cetacean conservation and ecotourism to students of the “Anzoátegui”, “Carlos Ramón Aponte” and “César Zumeta” schools and the Misión Sucre’s local “Aldea Universitaria”, with attendance of more than 130 pupils and teachers.
- A training seminar presented 17-19 May to 31 professionals and students of Tourism and Biology in the “UPEL Maracay” University.
- An agreement reached with the Center for Excursionists and the Science Center of the UPEL Maracay to present training seminars on a regular basis.
- Upon request by authorities of the UNEFA University in the city of Cagua, two undergraduate students of Tourism conducted professional internships under Jaime Bolaños’ guidance, in support of activities related to this project.
- Professional advice is being provided to local educators Profs. Cristina Castillo and Gerson Macía for their graduate research projects on “Tourism Management”. These colleagues are the coordinators of the Science Center for young scientists of the César Zumeta High School in Ocumare de la Costa de Oro. These young students participated 20-22 June in the “Festival of Science and Technology for High School students of the State of Aragua” hosted by Fundacite Aragua, the governmental agency for Development of Science and Technology in the State of Aragua ([www.fundacite.org.gov.ve](http://www.fundacite.org.gov.ve)). In the meeting, these students were awarded First Place and will participate in the National Festival representing the State of Aragua.
- Upon a request of the “Innovative Production Social Network for Ecotourism in Ocumare de la Costa de Oro” (a program of Fundacite Aragua and the People’s Ministry for Science and Technology), scientific advice and training seminars on cetacean research and conservation and leadership will be provided to locals on a regular basis, in order for them to be able to operate more responsibly.
- Jaime Bolaños and his team participated as naturalists in four guided field trips organized by students of the UNEFA, Science Center of the César Zumeta School, CEUPEL-UPEL Maracay and Swimming Club “Tiburones”. Participants learned about the importance of local mangrove forests, marine-coastal ecosystems, cetaceans, and cloud forests of the Henri Pittier National Park.
- As expected, field trips confirmed the presence of Atlantic spotted and bottlenose dolphins (*Stenella frontalis* and *Tursiops truncatus*, respectively); Photographs taken during these surveys were incorporated in two catalogues for individual identification of dolphins in the region. Photographs of Atlantic spotted dolphins were incorporated in a catalogue under curatorship of biologists Olga Herrera, María

Gabriela Silva and Jaime Bolaños. Photographs of bottlenose dolphins were provided to Biologist Sergio Cobarrubia and will be used as part of his Masters' research on the bio-ecological aspects of the bottlenose dolphin off Aragua State.