STATUS OF BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN IN PUERTO RICO, 
AND A PLAN FOR A SYSTEMATIC SURVEY

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Although opportunistic records of the Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) have been collected in the northeastern Caribbean, no systematic study exists on the ecology of Bottlenose dolphins in the area. This species has been reported throughout the Caribbean, including Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Grenada and the Grenadines, Trinidad (Trinidad and Tobago), the British and U.S. Virgin Islands, and St. Vincent. In Puerto Rico, the species was characterized as common throughout the year. Nineteen strandings and mortality cases have been reported. This species ranked second in the number of stranding cases among all marine mammal species encountered in the study area. The distribution within Puerto Rico was not uniform, animals being common in the north and southwest coasts. Eighty-six sightings have been recorded in a period of thirty-three years with a mean group size between 7.2 and 8.3 individuals. Their distribution seems to be restricted to areas of low sea floor relief, near the shelf edge and offshore waters. A plan for a systematic survey off the west coast of Puerto Rico is proposed to assess parameters of the ecology, abundance and site fidelity of the species.