

Project Update: June 2013

Eleven skin samples were collected during the surveys using a remote biopsy system (PAXARMS). We use molecular tools to determine the stock structure and the conservation status of this population of bottlenose dolphins in Bocas del Toro. We studied population genetics using maternally inherited mtDNA (mitochondrial DNA) markers and 11 microsatellite loci. Our results from the mtDNA control region analyses show this population has only one haplotype, not previously described anywhere in the Caribbean. This haplotype is shared between males and females suggesting a high philopatry. The Neighbor-Joining analyses grouped this haplotype in a unique clade with previously described “inshore ecotype” haplotypes from Puerto Rico, Cuba, Bahamas and Mexico. Our results suggest that bottlenose dolphin population of Bocas del Toro could be the result of a “founder effect” from Caribbean northern populations and Atlantic populations. Microsatellite analyses are currently underway.

