

Project Update: May 2017

In the 2016 dry season (August – October) two different methodologies to detect manatees with a sidescan sonar were tested: (i) random transects with an electric motor-powered boat; and (ii) 3 km transects in deeper waters with a paddled canoe. It was noted that electric motors attract cetaceans and possibly frighten and therefore hinder the identification of manatees, so the second method showed to be the best alternative. Even concentrating efforts in areas of supposed manatee aggregation, our detection rate (confirmed through consultation with specialists) was very low (< 5 animals in 113 km travelled by paddle). Reasons can be: (i) mild drought which causes animals not to aggregate in the known areas; and (ii) insufficient extension surveyed. Therefore, sample design must be adjusted; the next step is to improve methodology in collaboration with Dr Daniel Gonzalez-Socoloske, specialist in sidescan sonar applied to manatee studies, which is planned to take place in July 2017.



First attempts to detect Amazonian manatees with sidescan sonar during surveys in Amanã Lake. ©André Coelho.