

Project Update: December 2017

Samples from wild humpback whales collected in the Colombian Pacific were analysed to assess total mercury (THg) in both skin and blubber tissues. THg concentrations were measured by atomic absorption spectrometry (AMA-454, Altec). Results of these analyses showed that THg concentrations ranged between 3,63 and 45,70 $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$ (mean=20,37 $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$, SD=9,99). Significant differences were found in THg concentrations by tissue type in the same individual, with higher THg concentrations in skin than in blubber samples. Although these whales do not feed in Colombian waters, these preliminary results indicate that humpback whales are bio accumulating mercury in the Antarctic Peninsula (feeding area), which could have conservation implications for this population.

