Project Update: June 2023

Project Abstract

Within the river/freshwater dolphins, the genus *Inia*, is classified as threatened, due to a rapid reduction of its populations. The population assessments are a priority to strengthen current policies in Bolivia. So, this study is to assess the status of river dolphin populations in Bolivia; to determine and predict possible population trends with news and old data in two of the main rivers of distribution of the species. In addition, we will evaluate an alternative passive acoustic method for estimating populations, which represents a new technology that is easy to use and more effective for long-term monitoring.

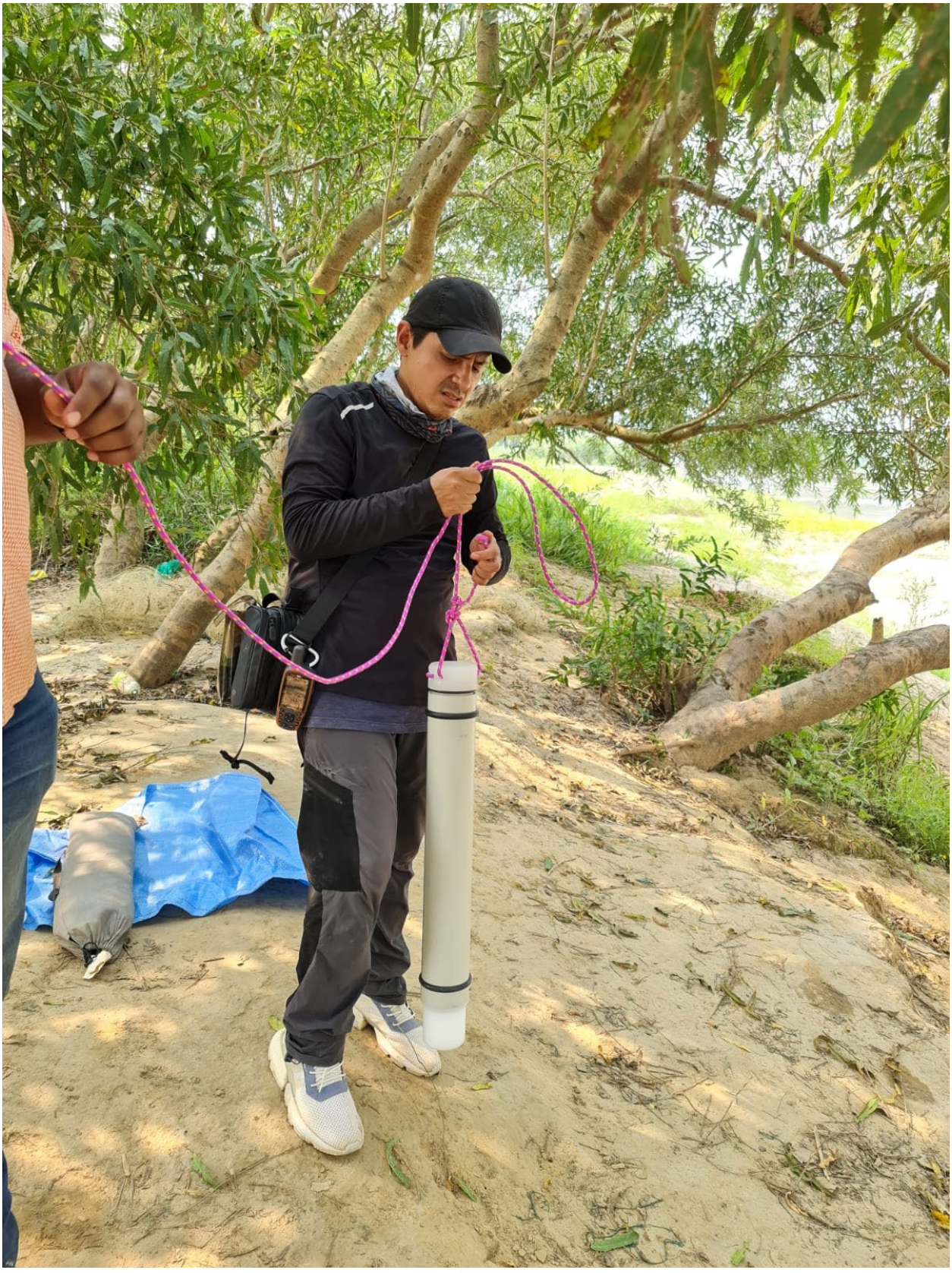
Summary of activities carried out during the year 2022 - the first year of project implementation.

The survey to assess the population status of the Bolivian river dolphin during the wet-dry transition period was conducted using the standardised method of small cetacean counting at a regional level in freshwater. A total of 71.53 km of the Ibare River, 311.95 km of the Mamore River, and 73.86 km of the Apere River were traversed, covering a combined distance of 457.34 km of rivers within the Mamore River sub-basin. Throughout the evaluated area, a total of 162 river dolphins were sighted (Table 1).

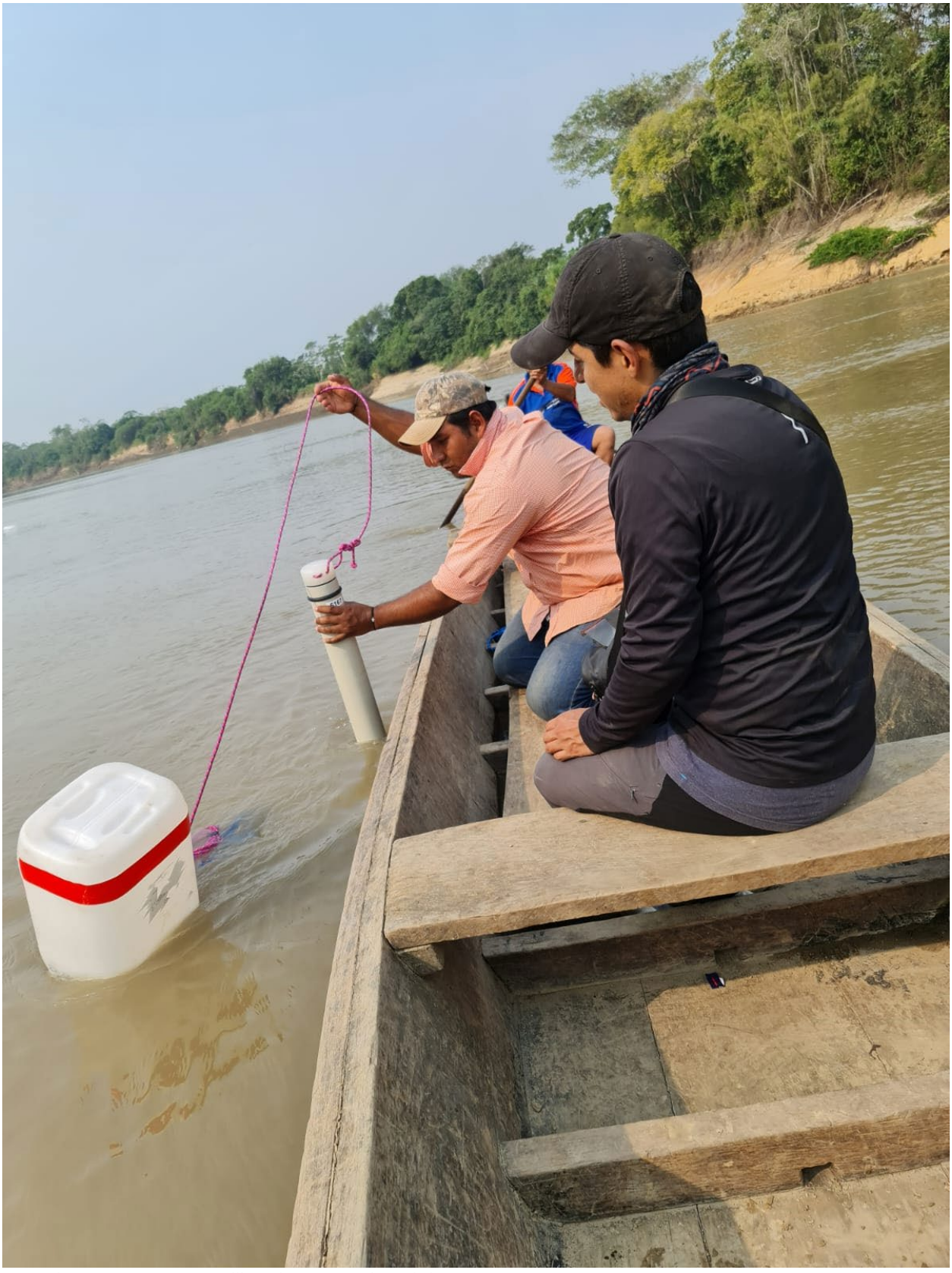
RIVER	**EFFORT (KM SURVEY)**	**COUNT MINIMUN**
IBARE	71.53	17
MAMORE	311.95	89
APERE	73.86	56
TOTAL	**457.34**	**162**

During the first 6 months, several field trips were conducted to search for an optimal location to deploy the passive acoustic device (F-POD) that meets the necessary minimum conditions to ensure data recording, has confirmed presence of river dolphins throughout the entire year, is safe, and has the support of local community members who can take care of the equipment, disseminate information among people living nearby, and collaborate with the project.

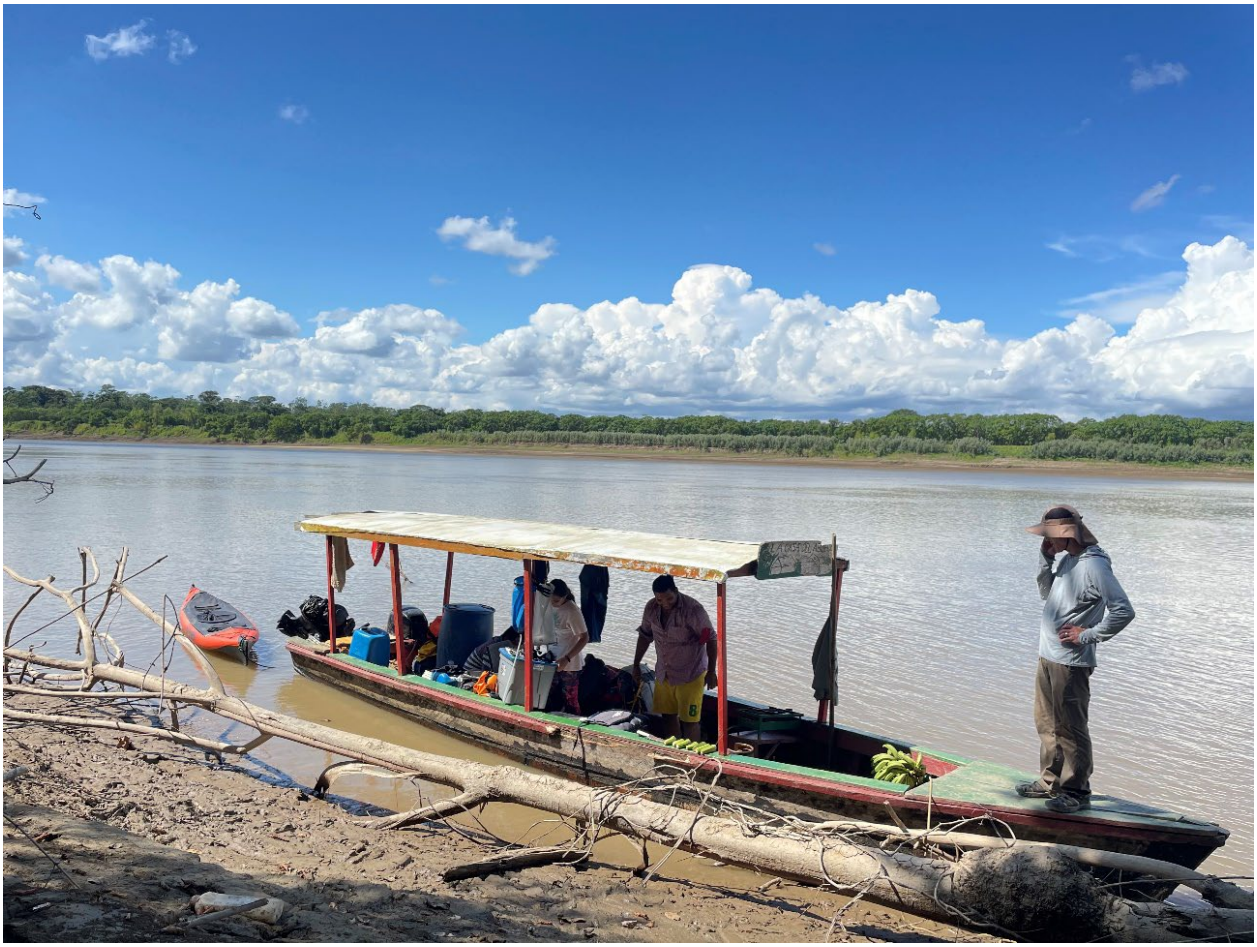
The F-POD was installed on August 27, 2022, along the Pojije River, a tributary of the Mamore River (coordinates: 299455.88 E - 8292916.25 S), and is being monitored by the Fishermen Association of the community of Camiaco. The device worked for a total of 159.25 days until February 2, 2023, when it was temporarily removed due to rising water levels. It was reinstalled on June 19, 2023, and the plan is to keep the F-POD active until September 2023. The data is currently stored to facilitate the corresponding analysis once the complete dataset is available.



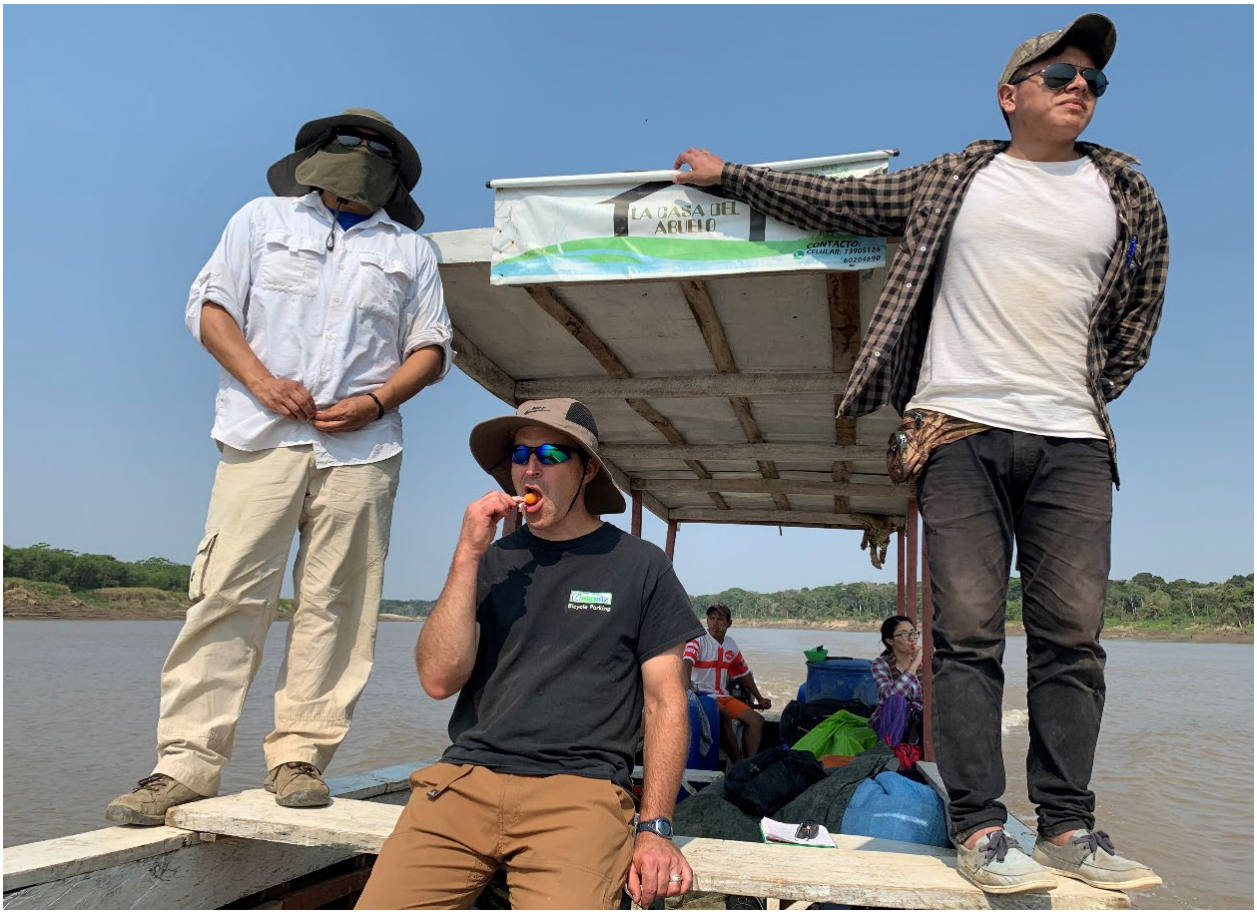
Checking the F-Pod to prepare the recording.



nstalling F-POD on Pojije River, Beni Bolivia.



Apere River Survey: Team's Mid-Day Rest for Population Estimation.



Bolivian River Dolphin Count in Mamore River, Beni, Bolivia.