



Part 2

Isla dos Golfinhos How Tourism affects the Spinner Dolphins of Fernando de Noronha

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Report 2 of 3



Report 2 - The Present

Projeto Golfinho Rotador is an NGO on the island of Fernando de Noronha. The “Spinner dolphin Project” was founded in 1990, out of passion and a necessity for preserving the islands dolphin population. For over 30 years they have been researching everything there is to research on the spinner dolphins (*Stenella longirostris*). Behaviour above and under the water’s surface, population size and changes, migrations and especially how dolphins have been reacting to so many tourists being in the water. While documenting dolphin – human contact, especially that during canoe tours, the team focuses on changes in direction of canoes, how close canoes are getting, if they are following the dolphins around and how regularly the dolphins are surfacing. Irregular surfacing is a sign of distress and disorganisation within the pod.

In 1988 the marine national park around the island was created by federal decree. It is administered by the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMbio), which is part of the Brazilian Ministry of Environment. The marine national park covers 70% of the island, extending all along the southern coastline. The harbour in the north and most of the populated areas on land fall under a different level of protection, which is far lower. This area is called the APA, the environmental protection area. Here, human impact on dolphins and other wildlife is much less restricted.

There are two main places where dolphin pods come to rest during the day. One goes by the fitting name of “dolphin bay” and lies in the west of the island. We visit the lookout point over the bay and talk to Rafael and Ana from the Spinner Dolphin Project about why the bay is so special. Nobody but researchers are allowed to enter here.

One of the protective measures in place is the ban on underwater filming of dolphins. This surprised us at first, because we were making a documentary on the conservation of the dolphins. After speaking with Rafael from Projeto Golfinho Rotador, it became clear that by forbidding everyone except researchers from filming dolphins, it ensures people don’t get too close to the dolphins or chase them for footage. This rule is one that will help ensure the dolphins wellbeing in a future of increased tourism.

There seem to be two types of tourists on the island. Those that come to witness Fernando de Noronha’s incredible nature and wildlife in a respectful way and those that seem to find themselves on the island simply for the pleasures of a relaxing and fun holiday. Most touristic activities on the water take place in the harbour and in the surrounding waters. This is the most problematic area on the island, as wildlife is not protected by the national park rules. The APA Zone here has a softer set of rules, allowing for human activity.

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