

## ***Amazon River Dolphins Still Can Be Saved***

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Most children don't have a good grasp on colors when they first start their drawing journey. Maybe they'll draw a blue dog, a green monkey, or a vivid fuschia dolphin! Except, there is a rare species of dolphin that is a striking pink color. The *Inia geoffrensis* is one of the largest river dolphins, with its body size not even being the most interesting feature (they average around 157 kg or 346 lbs!). An interesting fact is that the males tend to be larger than the females, which is uncommon among its river dolphin counterparts. These unique freshwater mammals also have 40% more brain capacity than a human. These exciting dolphins are located in Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela... along with being in the Red Book. It's quite easy to identify one of these creatures due to their bulbous foreheads (also known as a melon) which they use for echolocation. These flexible creatures are quite good at navigating through flooded forests, even though they are so large. Their primary food source is fish, but it's not the lack of food sources that are killing them off. The blame is completely on anthropogenic threats, primarily dams and dredging. The IUCN lists "fishing, bycatch, intentional killing (fisheries use them for bait), and habitat destruction (mining, logging, and agricultural conversion)" as some of the many causes to their numbers being depleted. To get a better understanding of what is going on with their populations, researchers at the University of Exeter and the Peruvian conservation organization Pro Delphinus tagged eight dolphins to track their expeditions and see how close they were to any disruptions, like fishing sites. Their findings were that "on average, 89% of the dolphins' home range was used for fishing", and emphasized that "Knowledge of the ecology of the Amazon River dolphin, particularly its reliance on the diverse habitats available, is critical for improving the conservation prospects for this species". Overall, these eight dolphins were found within 30 miles of the dredging sites and dams, and these are just examples. Most of the Amazonian dolphins are actually found much closer to these sites. "Given that many of these dams and dredging projects are still in the planning stage, we advise the government to consider the negative effects these activities have already had on river species elsewhere." These dams won't just have effects on the dolphins though, they might affect other aquatic species and will cause a significant decline in biodiversity in these regions. Within Brazil, there are more than 428 dams that are planning to be built, but it isn't too late to stop it! "It's clear that the Amazon river dolphin is facing increasing threats from humans," says Dr. Elizabeth Campbell, of the Centre for Ecology and Conservation on Exeter's Penryn Campus in Cornwall. You can support campaigns like "Stop dirty Dams in the Amazon", and spread awareness about issues like these!

## **References:**

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"Stop Dirty Dams in the Amazon. Helping Dreamers Do." *Www.responsiblevacation.com*, [www.responsiblevacation.com/copy/stop-dirty-dams-in-the-amazon](http://www.responsiblevacation.com/copy/stop-dirty-dams-in-the-amazon).