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ABSTRACT:

ACTIVITY BUDGET OF TWO MALE *INIA GEOFFRENSIS HUMBOLDTIANA* IN A CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT

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Studying the behaviour of *Inia geoffrensis* in its natural habitat is difficult, and since very few individuals are housed in a controlled environment (<10 worldwide), our knowledge on the behaviour of this species is presently incomplete. The aim of this study was to compile a first behavioural catalog for this taxon and to quantitatively assess: a) which activities *Inia* mainly exhibits, b) their time budget and c) possible diversifications of behaviours at different hours of the day. Two adult male river dolphins were systematically observed for four consecutive weeks in May 2006 at Duisburg Zoo

(Germany). A total of 120 focal sessions, lasting one hour each (e.g., 60 hours/animal) were carried out in three predetermined diurnal time phases - respectively starting at 07.00 a.m., midday and 05.00 p.m. -. This study recorded 55 different behavioural units distinguishable in events and states. The measurement of units' frequency and duration was accomplished by means of Observer (Noldus) software. An absolute predominance of swimming activity vs. stationary positions (53 vs. 7 minutes/hour) was found. However, while swimming river dolphins performed a wide spectrum of displays ranging from extremely frequent affiliative social acts (e.g. reciprocal body contacts, counted up to 66 times/hour) to repeated broad opening of the long rostrum and varied bubble displays (both 13 events/hour). Aerial displays such as "slaps" and "quasi-leaps" were very rare (about 1 every two hours), while other behaviours well-known in other odontocete species like bottlenose dolphins could not be observed at all. The latter was particularly true for behaviours such as 'rest on surface', 'leap', 'fluke out' or 'spy-hop'. On the other hand, the river dolphins carried out other activities which have been rarely described in cetacean literature, such as 'piggyback' - where one *Inia* swims over or lies upon the back of another individual - or reveal to be able to perform several behavioural states all at once (e.g. while transporting an object they can rub their bodies on the tank). This study should be a basis for further investigations on the behaviour of river dolphins, in order to achieve a better understanding of *Inia* behaviour and, with this, to help the conservation of both river dolphins and their environment.