

10% of dolphins killed as Amazon drought hits lake: study

October 18 2023



A stranded ferry boat at the Marina do Davi in the Negro river, near the city of Manaus, Amazonas State, which experiencing a drought.

An estimated 10 percent of the dolphins in a picturesque lake in the Brazilian Amazon were killed in a week as a record drought and searing temperatures devastate the region, researchers said Tuesday.

Emergency teams found 153 [dolphins](#) dead in the last week of September in Lake Tefe, where [water temperatures](#) reached 39.1 degrees Celsius, more than seven degrees higher than the normal maximum, according to the Mamirau Institute for Sustainable Development (IDSMD) and environmental group WWF-Brasil.

The lake is located in the drought-hit northern state of Amazonas, at the spot where the Tefe river empties into the Amazon, in the heart of the world's biggest rainforest.

Researchers reported 130 pink dolphins and 23 tucuxi dolphins killed. Both are listed as species with declining populations by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Huge numbers of fish have also died off, they said.

"What's happening in Lake Tefe is staggering. The impact of losing these animals is enormous and affects the entire local ecosystem," said Mariana Paschoalini Frias, conservation specialist at WWF-Brasil.

"Dolphins are considered 'sentinels.' They're indicators of the health of their environment. What's happening to them is reflected in other species, as well, including humans," she said in a statement.

Besides killing fish and dolphins, the drought has dramatically reduced river levels, devastating a region that relies on its labyrinth of waterways for transportation and basic needs.

The [federal government](#) has sent emergency aid to the stricken region,

where normally bustling river banks have turned to eerie, dessicated landscapes dotted with stranded boats.

Experts say the Amazon dry season has been worsened this year by the El Niño warming phenomenon.

Environment Minister Marina Silva has also blamed "uncontrolled climate change."

In state capital Manaus, located at the junction of the Amazon and Negro rivers, authorities reported the water level at the city's port reached its lowest level in 121 years Tuesday, hitting record low for the second straight day.

The Negro's water level stood at 13.49 meters (44 feet), the lowest since records began in 1902, port officials said.

Heavy smoke from [forest fires](#) has also engulfed Manaus in recent days, forcing the cancelation of the city's marathon last Sunday.

© 2023 AFP

Citation: 10% of dolphins killed as Amazon drought hits lake: study (2023, October 18) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-10-dolphins-amazon-drought-lake.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--