

Caiman and fishermen: negative interactions between crocodylians and riverside communities in northeastern Brazil

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Abstract: Exponential anthropic growth over the last decades associated with the suppression of natural environments has intensified the competition for space and resources between fauna and humans is becoming increasingly evident and common. Crocodylians and riverside populations, for example, overlap their areas of use in various regions of the world and are closely related. This research aims to identify the relationship between *Caiman latirostris* and fishing communities in a dam in northeastern Brazil. The field activities were carried out in Tapacurá river reservoir, located in São Lourenço da Mata municipality, Pernambuco, between 2015 and 2018. In this locality, there are Atlantic Forest Conservation Unit and areas with housing, agriculture and open fields of livestock. We identified 53 residences adjacent to the dam, with frequent fishing activity practiced by local families. Between April 2015 and March 2016, 101 fishing nets were identified distributed throughout the reservoir at the same time, as well as two caiman traps. Five animals were found trapped in fishing nets, two young and three adults. Smaller animals had limb injuries, with strangulation observed in the forelimbs due to entanglement with the nets. Adult animals, in turn, did not present external lesions, two of them being detached from the nets and one coming to death due to the aspiration of nylon gillnet, with 21 cm of material in the individual's trachea. A large distribution of fishing nets has been observed, often not respecting the boundaries of protected areas, sometimes turn into ghost nets increasing the already existing bycatch and endangering the conservation of the region's aquatic fauna. Environmental education works are being carried out in the region to elucidate the need and importance of wildlife conservation associated with fishing resources maintaining, including crocodylians.

Keywords: *Caiman latirostris*, Conservation, Environmental education, Fishing

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