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Dr. Nélio Baptista Barros honored with NOAA Environmental Hero Award

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has selected Dr. Nélio Baptista Barros as one of its Environmental Heroes for 2010. The Environmental Hero Award honors individuals and organizations that volunteer their time to help NOAA carry out its mission.

Dr. Barros, a scientist at Portland State University, was awarded posthumously for his contributions to NOAA's mission through his research on marine mammal conservation and his contributions to the National Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Program.

"Nélio was a scientific collaborator, always willing to share his work with others, who spent his career working to better understand cetaceans in their natural environment," said Barros' colleague Dr. Teri Rowles, NOAA's lead veterinarian for the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program. "He truly recognized the importance of national and international collaboration in understanding marine mammals and the oceans in which they live."

Dr. Rowles added that Dr. Barros often lent his expertise to investigations of mass strandings and unusual marine mammal deaths. His research and knowledge of marine mammal food webs, foraging strategies and behavior provided valuable insight toward learning the cause of many stranding cases.

Dr. Barros received his Bachelor of Science degree in Biological Oceanography in Brazil. He later earned his M.S. in Biological Oceanography and his Ph.D. in Marine Biology and Fisheries from the University of Miami. He spent most of his career on the east coast, working at the University of Miami, Hubbs Sea World Institute and Mote Marine Lab in Florida. In 2006 he moved to the west coast to work at Portland State University as the Northern Oregon and Southern Washington Marine Mammal Stranding Network Coordinator. He passed away in February after a battle with cancer.

"Nélio was both a friend and a mentor to many of NOAA's marine mammal scientists and the entire marine mammal stranding network community," said Dr. Janet Whaley, NOAA's National Marine Mammal Stranding Coordinator. "He will truly be missed by all who knew and worked with him."

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