



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE RESCUES THE LAST FOUR TRAINED DOLPHINS WASHED INTO MISSISSIPPI SOUND AFTER HURRICANE KATRINA

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service and the Marine Life Aquarium of Gulfport, Miss., working with a number of other partners, rescued the last four of the eight trained bottlenose dolphins that were swept out of an aquarium tank torn apart by the storm surge of Hurricane Katrina on August 29th. Normally held in captivity, the dolphins don't have the necessary skills to survive on their own. They have survived various injuries and predators and have stayed together since the storm.

On September 10, the team of NOAA marine mammal biologists and aquarium trainers first located the eight dolphins and began providing food and medicine to the animals. Over the course of a week, the team was able to capture four of the weakest dolphins, and has been feeding the others several times a day as they planned and performed the multi-stage rescue. The remaining four dolphins vanished over the weekend. Through reports from the Coast Guard, NOAA Fisheries Service scientists found the dolphins this morning while doing surveys in a NOAA boat near Biloxi, Miss.

"Among all the destruction and loss from Hurricane Katrina, this dolphin rescue is a bit of good news. It is a wonderful example of partners coming together to bring the dolphins to safety," said Dr. Bill Hogarth, NOAA Fisheries Service director. "This rescue effort is a success story for all the partners involved and for the public who have taken such an interest in the plight of these dolphins."

Due to the unclean condition of the water and the difficulty of the rescue, biologists captured the dolphins in stages. The animals were transported to nearby salt-water pools, provided by the U.S. Navy, where they will receive medical care and be evaluated for diseases, including contagious diseases. NOAA Fisheries Service lead veterinarian Dr. Teri Rowles said the dolphins will be kept in quarantine while scientists access their overall health.

"We're pleased we were able to rescue all eight dolphins," said Rowles. "They are now in a situation where full diagnostics can be done and medical care can be provided. The rescue team remains cautiously optimistic that they will recover from this ordeal."

The rescue effort involved partners including the U.S. Navy, the Air National Guard, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Gulf World Marine Park, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute.

Days before the hurricane, workers at the Marine Life Aquarium were able to move another group of dolphins into hotel swimming pools. These animals survived the storm and were moved to the Gulfarium in Fort Walton Beach, Fla. The eight dolphins that were rescued from the wild had been left in a large Marine Life Aquarium pool that had survived Hurricane Camille in 1969.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners and nearly 60 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

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