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Dolphins swept away by Katrina rescued in Gulf

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Marine biologists have rescued the last four of eight trained dolphins that were swept to sea by Hurricane Katrina.



Ens. Michael Dabling, right, feeds rescued dolphins in Gulfport, Miss. A 40-foot wave from Katrina swept the dolphins from their tanks.

U.S. Navy

Before the hurricane hit the coast on Aug. 29, the dolphins were moved to a pool at the Marine Life Oceanarium that had withstood the destruction of Hurricane Camille in 1969. Katrina destroyed that pool and pulled the mammals out into the Gulf of Mexico.

"Three of the dolphins were born at the facility, and had never been in the wild, compacting our concern for their well-being," said Moby Solangi, owner and director for the Marine Life Aquarium.

Because the dolphins are from a captive facility, they do not forage for food or necessarily have the survival skills needed to avoid predators or boat traffic, experts said.

Biologists located the dolphins on Sept. 10 by performing aerial surveys. They were monitored and fed from boats and four were rescued within days, but the other four had left the area. They were plucked from the Mississippi Sound on Tuesday. All of the dolphins have been reunited.

"I think it's been good news for a lot of people who have had a lot of bad news lately," said Connie Barclay, spokeswoman for the National Marine Fisheries Service.

The dolphins appeared to have some large lacerations and were as much as 100 pounds underweight, said marine mammal biologist Jeff Foster, who led the rescue.

Despite the injuries, the animals are recovering well and will be quarantined until experts are sure they do not have any communicable diseases.

"They are doing great," Foster said. "It's been a confusing day for them for sure, but after a day they could settle down and feel at home."

The Marine Life Oceanarium featured the dolphins doing jumps and other tricks in programs for tourists.

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