



Two Mississippi dolphins rescued after Katrina

Reuters

Sep. 15, 2005 - Wildlife experts on Thursday rescued two of eight bottlenose dolphins swept from their aquarium home into the Gulf of Mexico by Hurricane Katrina and said they hoped to recapture the others in the next few days.

Moby Solangi, president of the Marine Life Oceanarium in Gulfport, Mississippi, said the two rescued dolphins, 30-year-old Jackie and her 16-year-old offspring, Toni, had been taken to a hotel swimming pool.

The six others, including Jackie's 5-year-old son, Elijah, are still in the Gulf and will be rescued as soon as the U.S. Navy provides salt water tanks to house them, said Connie Barclay, spokeswoman for the fisheries division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

She said Jackie and Toni were rescued even though the tanks were not on hand because tests showed they were anemic and in need of immediate help. They are being held in a Holiday Inn swimming pool but that is not a good long-term environment.

Teams of oceanographers and Coast Guard officers used orange rafts equipped with mattresses to transport them to shore where an air-conditioned van made the short trip to temporary quarters in the swimming pool.

They will then be transported to other aquariums in the country when the salt-water tanks arrive.

A wave estimated to be 40 feet high swept the sea mammals from their tank at the oceanarium and into the Gulf when Katrina struck on August 29.

The group of dolphins was spotted in the Gulf, off the Mississippi coast on Saturday and appeared to have survived the cataclysm although Solangi said some seemed to be underweight while others had scratches.

"They all look good. They're coming right up to the boats," said Jeff Siegel, director of operations at the oceanarium.

Because they lived in captivity and do not know how to forage for food, they are being fed several times a day from a boat by oceanarium workers.

Of 26 sea lions kept at the facility, five are dead, one is missing and the other 20 have gone to other aquariums, mostly in Florida. A seal is also was missing.

A crumpled support arch for the oceanarium's dome was all that was left standing amid a scene of coastal destruction.

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