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Mississippi's Displaced Dolphins Rescued

Animal Planet News

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Sept. 22, 2005 — All eight of the Marine Life Oceanarium's dolphins, which were swept out of an aqua Gulfport, Miss., during Hurricane Katrina, have been rescued, according to recent news reports.

The final four — Shelly, Jill, Tamara and Elijah — were rescued on Tuesday, Sept. 20, according to a p National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The others — Toni, Jackie, Noah and Kelly — were rescued the week before.

"Among all the destruction and loss from Hurricane Katrina, this dolphin rescue is a bit of good news," NOAA Fisheries Service director, in the NOAA press release.

"It is a wonderful example of partners coming together to bring the dolphins to safety."

The rescue effort involved NOAA, the Marine Life Oceanarium, U.S. Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, Air Nat Department of Agriculture, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Gulf World Marine P: Branch Oceanographic Institute.

All eight dolphins have been moved to emergency holding tanks at the U.S. Navy's Seabee base, where medical attention and be evaluated for diseases.

"They are now in a situation where full diagnostics can be done and medical care can be provided," saic veterinarian for the NOAA Fisheries Service, in the NOAA press release.

"The rescue team remains cautiously optimistic that they will recover from this ordeal."

The dolphins were discovered on Saturday, Sept. 10, at the mouth of the Port of Gulfport near the ruins Oceanarium nearly two weeks after they were swept out of their tank by storm surges from Hurricane K to the organization's Web site.

They were swimming in water polluted with petroleum products and other chemicals dumped from nea the storm.

Several of the dolphins had suffered injuries, including Elijah, who was discovered with a stingray barb

according to the Marine Life Oceanarium's Web site.

The rescue team fed the dolphins and administered medication several times a day as they planned a menu which involved teaching the animals to leap onto floating mats and into the arms of waiting trainers.

It was decided to rescue the four weakest dolphins — Toni, Jackie, Noah and Kelly — first, said the NOAA. The first of these, Toni and Jackie, were rescued on Thursday, Sept. 15, followed by Noah on Friday and Kelly on Saturday.

The other four vanished on Sunday, Sept. 18, possibly because they were chased from the Port of Gulfport by predators or wild dolphins, said the Marine Life Oceanarium's Web site.

Working with reports from the U.S. Coast Guard, the rescue team found the remaining dolphins — Sheena and Elijah — Tuesday morning behind the Beau Rivage Casino near Biloxi, Miss.

"This rescue effort is a success story for all the partners involved and for the public who have taken sympathy for the plight of these dolphins," said Bill Hogarth in the NOAA press release.

The Marine Life Oceanarium, a landmark institution in Gulfport, Miss., had been home to 14 dolphins, sea turtles and exotic birds. It was "completely destroyed" by Hurricane Katrina, according to the organization's Web site.

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