



Two Aquarium Dolphins Rescued in Gulf

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Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. — Two dolphins that were swept from their aquarium tanks into the Gulf of Mexico by Hurricane Katrina were rescued Thursday, but six others remained at sea.

The two rescued dolphins were captured after scientists in a boat coaxed the trained animals into sliding onto mats.

The dolphins had cuts and appeared to be the worst injured of the eight, Jeff Foster, a marine specialist with the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration** ([search](#)). They were being moved to a hotel swimming pool.

Trainers and scientists hope to catch more of the dolphins on Saturday, but said that may be tougher because the dolphins "get pretty wise to our tricks," Foster said. Nets are also an option, a NOAA spokeswoman said.

The marine mammals had spent much of their lives in captivity at the Marine Life Oceanarium in Gulfport. After Katrina's storm surge washed them away, they were spotted Saturday swimming off Gulfport by NOAA scientists conducting an aerial damage survey.

Because the dolphins have spent much of their lives in captivity, they may not have developed the survival skills necessary to avoid predators and boat traffic, the scientists said.

The dolphins' home had been a 30-foot high tank at Gulfport's nearly 50-year-old **Marine Life Oceanarium** ([search](#)), which had survived Hurricane Camille but was destroyed by Katrina.

Three of eight dolphins were born at the aquarium, said Moby Solangi, the aquarium's owner.

"Once we realized the dolphins had been swept out to sea during the hurricane, we feared that they had died," Solangi said. "We are just thrilled that they have stayed together during the past couple of weeks."

They have already been feeding the dolphins several times a day but the mammals appear to be significantly underweight and have severe to minor wounds, said Teri Rowles, lead veterinarian for NOAA's Fisheries Service.

NOAA spokeswoman Kim Amendola said two methods can be used to catch the dolphins.

"Some of the dolphins are trained so they're trying to get those dolphins to swim up onto mats," she said. "If that is not successful, they may have to use a net."

Once rescued, the dolphins will be taken to nearby saltwater pools provided by the Navy for medical evaluation and treatment, Rowles said.

Before Katrina struck, some of the younger dolphins from the aquarium were moved inland to hotel swimming pools and were not threatened by the storm. They have since been moved to aquariums in Florida.

Nineteen sea lions also were missing from the Oceanarium.

One of those, Andre, a 250-pound sea lion, has found a temporary home at the Memphis Zoo.

The storm washed him from his pen and he wandered for 11 days before he was discovered behind a casino and shipped to Memphis.

Andre lost about 100 pounds but specialists said he's in good shape.

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