

Contact: Kim Amendola
727-551-5707

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Bottlenose Dolphin Dies After Numerous Entanglements

*Rio the dolphin dies in same location "Winter", star of the movie "Dolphin Tale", was rescued
NOAA Fisheries Service asks your help in preventing similar fishing gear Interactions*

Rio, a male dolphin known by NOAA's Fisheries Service, was discovered dead in the Indian River Lagoon off Florida's east coast a little more than a week ago; the same location Winter, the tailless bottlenose dolphin featured in the upcoming film "Dolphin Tale," was rescued nearly six years ago.

Rio was not as fortunate as Winter. Even after three previous rescues, the dolphin succumbed to injuries sustained during another severe entanglement in fishing line that wrapped around his dorsal fin extending to his tail, limiting his ability to surface and swim.

"Since November 2008, we authorized an unprecedented three rescue efforts to disentangle Rio from commercial and recreational fishing line", said Erin Fougères, southeast marine mammal stranding program administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. "After each rescue, he became re-entangled in new gear, lost a little more of his dorsal fin and ultimately his life."

Rio represents the unfortunate outcome of many dolphins suffering from fishing line, hook, and/or lure entanglements and ingestions. Between 2005-2009 from North Carolina through Texas, 40 percent of all stranded bottlenose dolphins with evidence of fishery interaction were associated with fishing line, hooks, and/or lures, with 21 percent of those stranding in Florida. (Learn more about Rio's entanglement.)

Rio is one of two recent cases that represent a growing trend of fishing gear interactions throughout the southeast United States. Nearly six years ago, Winter also suffered injuries from a fishing gear entanglement in the Indian River Lagoon. In December 2005, she was entangled in crab trap fishing gear causing the complete loss of her tail. Winter survived her life-threatening injuries and is in permanent care at the Clearwater Marine Aquarium.

Winter was fortunate to have been rescued and survive the injuries she sustained from the crab trap, but many dolphins do not survive similar entanglements. Between 2005-2009 from North Carolina through Texas, 21 percent of stranded bottlenose dolphins with evidence of fishery interaction were associated with crab trap gear, with 10 percent of those stranding in Florida. (Learn more about Winter's entanglement.)

(more)

Unfortunately fishing gear entanglements are not the only challenges facing bottlenose dolphins and affecting conservation efforts. In some instances, these fishery interactions are a result of dolphins being illegally fed by people.

“Once people feed them, dolphins learn to associate people with food, beg for handouts, and pursue fishermen’s bait, catch, or fishing discards. Dolphins that are fed by people are more likely to get entangled in fishing gear, ingest fishing gear or get hit by boats,” said Stacey Horstman, bottlenose dolphin conservation coordinator for NOAA’s Fisheries Service.

NOAA Fisheries Service asks your help in stopping this growing trend of fishing gear interactions with bottlenose dolphins and the resulting life-threatening injuries.

The following fishing practices and responsible viewing techniques can help keep dolphins from associating people with food and suffering life-threatening injuries or death from fishing gear interactions:

- Immediately report entangled, injured, or dead marine mammals to 1-877-WHALE HELP (1-877-942-5343) - do not push them back into the water.
- Never feed wild dolphins – it’s illegal and teaches dolphins to take your bait, catch, fishing discards, and beg. Learn more at, www.dontfeedwilddolphins.org
- Avoid touching, swimming, or otherwise closely interacting with wild dolphins, even if they approach you.
- Reel in fishing line when dolphins are near and don’t cast towards or around dolphins, especially if they are engaged in feeding activities;
- Recycle fishing line - place all broken or used fishing line a Monofilament Fishing Line Recycling Bin or a lidded trash can. Learn more at, <http://mrrp.myfwc.com/>.
- When using crab traps, limit float lines to minimum length necessary, especially in shallow or slack water; and use inverted crab trap bait wells or other modified traps to discourage dolphins from tipping traps to feed on bait inside. Learn more at, <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/mm/dolphins/bdtrp.htm> under “educational information”.

Both Rio and Winter’s rescues were led by teams from NOAA’s Fisheries Service, Marine Mammal Stranding Network. Hubb-SeaWorld Institute and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission were first responders to both dolphins.

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On the web:

www.dontfeedwilddolphins.org

NOAA Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/mm/dolphins/bdconservation.htm>

Dolphin SMART Program <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/dolphinmart>

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