

Dolphin freed from fishing gear in Indian River Lagoon



An entangled dolphin is freed from fishing gear in the Indian River Lagoon near Vero Beach. / Hubbs SeaWorld Research Institute

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A dolphin mother once again swims safely with its calf after being freed from trap pot fishing gear in the Indian River Lagoon near Vero Beach.

Reports of an entangled dolphin came in Monday, according to NOAA fisheries officials.

Biologists with FAU-Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute verified the report. Then a marine mammal rescue team caught both the mom and its calf. Biologists try to keep mother-calf dolphin pairs together so they don't become separated during the disentanglement process, NOAA officials said.

By Monday afternoon, the team had successfully disentangled the dolphin, removing the trap pot fishing gear from around its body and flipper. The mother dolphin was captured with its calf. The two were evaluated and released together.

The rescue team included biologists from NOAA, Harbor Branch, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute, the University of Florida, SeaWorld Orlando, Volusia County, Georgia Aquarium Conservation Field Station and Clearwater Marine Aquarium.

NOAA is investigating the unusual death of at least 76 bottlenose dolphins in the Indian River Lagoon over the past year.

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