

Baby dolphins dying along oil-soaked US Gulf Coast

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A woman walks the beach in Gulf Shores, Alabama, in 2010. Baby dolphins are washing up dead along the oil-soaked US Gulf Coast at more than 10 times the normal rate in the first birthing season since the BP disaster, researchers said.

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Some 17 baby dolphin corpses have been found along the shorelines of Alabama and Mississippi in the past two weeks, The Institute for [Marine Mammal](#) Studies said.

"The average is one or two a month. This year we have 17, and February isn't even over yet," said Moby Solangi, director of the Gulfport, Mississippi-based institute.

"For some reason, they've started aborting or they were dead before they were born."

Solangi is awaiting results from a necropsy performed on two of the dolphins Monday to determine a cause of death.

But he called the high numbers an anomaly and said the Deepwater Horizon disaster, which unleashed millions of barrels of oil into the [Gulf of Mexico](#) over three months, likely played a role.

Adult dolphin deaths tripled last year to 89 from a norm of about 30.

"We shouldn't really jump to any conclusions until we get some results," Solangi said. "But this is more than just a coincidence."

Dolphins breed in the spring -- around the time of the April 20 explosion that brought down the BP-leased [drilling rig](#) -- and carry their young for 11 to 12 months.

Birthing season goes into full swing in March and April.

The oil from the spill spread through the water column in massive underwater plumes and also worked its way into the bays and shallow waters where [dolphins](#) breed and give birth.

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