

Calif. rescuers hope dolphin finds way back to sea

April 29 2012



A dolphin swims in Orange County's Bolsa Chica wetlands in Huntington Beach, Calif., on Friday, April 27, 2012. Marine mammal experts in Southern California have decided to wait and see whether this dolphin that strayed into a shallow wetlands channel can find its way out. The healthy, strong and fast dolphin will not let people get close, and officials say it could be harmful to the animal and rescuers if a capture is attempted. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes)

(AP) -- A wayward dolphin that has spent two days in a narrow wetlands channel along the southern California coast was on its way out to the ocean Saturday when it suddenly turned tail and swam back to shallow waters.

Wildlife experts on paddleboards managed to coax the animal towards the open sea Saturday but it was spooked by a pair of fellow dolphins.

"He freaked out for some reason," said Peter Wallerstein of Marine Animal Rescue. "He split almost full-speed back under the bridge where he had been."

Rescuers decided to let the healthy, strong and fast dolphin try to find its own way out, Wallerstein said. Any attempt to capture it could be dangerous to the animal and rescuers.

The six-foot-long, black-and-white common dolphin was spotted in a channel of the Bolsa Chica wetlands Friday, circling in [shallow waters](#) as crowds grew along the banks and TV helicopters flew overhead.

Wallerstein said the 400-pound dolphin doesn't need a high tide to escape.

"He's not stranded and he's not trapped," Wallerstein said. "He can make it out if he chooses to."

The wetlands are separated from the ocean by a wide beach and Pacific Coast Highway. Sea water flows in from Huntington Harbour on one end and an inlet cut through the beach on the opposite end.

The dolphin, part of a small pod seen in the harbor earlier in the week, entered the channel through a hole in a tidal gate that separates the harbor from the marsh, said Dean Gomersall, animal care supervisor at the nonprofit Pacific [Marine Mammal](#) Center.

The other five [dolphins](#) remained in the harbor and may have to be coaxed back out to sea, Gomersall said.

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