

When turtles fly: Cold-stunned animals nursed in Mississippi

December 8 2021



In this photo provided by the Mississippi Aquarium, one of 40 cold-stunned Kemp's ridley turtles is seen that the facility is caring for. The turtles arrived in Gulfport on Friday, Dec. 3, 2021. Credit: Celeste Forcier/Mississippi Aquarium via AP

Forty endangered sea turtles that were injured when the water off

Massachusetts [cooled down so quickly](#) that they couldn't swim away are being nursed back to health at the Mississippi Aquarium, flown there by a volunteer pilot group known as Turtles Fly Too.

All are Kemp's ridleys, the world's smallest sea turtles and the most endangered of the [six species](#) found in U.S. waters, the [aquarium](#) said in a news release Monday.

"All 40 of the Kemp's ridleys are pretty small," as little as 2.2 pounds (1 kilogram), said Alexa Delaune, the aquarium's vice president of veterinary services. Most showed signs of pneumonia and would be treated with antibiotics, she said.

Sea turtles can become lethargic when stunned by water that chills down around them before they can swim to warmer waters. The cold alone can kill them. It can also lead to pneumonia, shock and frostbite.

Some experts believe [climate change](#) is increasing the number of turtles afflicted off Cape Cod each winter.

This group of turtles was flown to Gulfport on Friday after the New England Aquarium in Massachusetts ran out of room and appealed for help, Mississippi Aquarium spokesman Jeff Clark said.

The aquarium was already caring for two turtles rescued last year in Massachusetts, one with a severe lung infection and the other with a shoulder infection that restricts movement. The Boston aquarium had asked the Gulfport aquarium to take them to make room for this year's injured, officials said in November.



In this photo provided by the Mississippi Aquarium, Mississippi Aquarium's Vice President of Veterinary Services Alexa Delaune examines one of 40 cold-stunned Kemp's ridley turtles. The turtles arrived in Gulfport on Friday, Dec. 3, 2021. Credit: Celeste Forcier/Mississippi Aquarium via AP



This image provided by the New England Aquarium shows a Kemp's ridley sea turtle being intubated to assist with its breathing Monday, Nov. 29, 2021, at New England Aquarium's Sea Turtle Hospital, in Quincy, Mass. Sea turtle strandings on Cape Cod are picking up after a slow start to the season, experts at the New England Aquarium said Monday. The aquarium has so far cared for almost 120 of the animals at its Quincy turtle hospital, the vast majority of which have been endangered Kemp's ridley turtles. Credit: Adam Kennedy/New England Aquarium via AP



This image provided by the New England Aquarium shows Kemp's ridley sea turtles being cared for Monday, Nov. 29, 2021, at New England Aquarium's Sea Turtle Hospital, in Quincy, Mass. Sea turtle strandings on Cape Cod are picking up after a slow start to the season, experts at the New England Aquarium said Monday. The aquarium has so far cared for almost 120 of the animals at its Quincy turtle hospital, the vast majority of which have been endangered Kemp's ridley turtles. Credit: Vanessa Kahn/New England Aquarium via AP



This image provided by the New England Aquarium shows Kemp's ridley sea turtles swimming in a tank Monday, Nov. 29, 2021, at New England Aquarium's Sea Turtle Hospital, in Quincy, Mass. Sea turtle strandings on Cape Cod are picking up after a slow start to the season, experts at the New England Aquarium said Monday, Nov. 29, 2021. The aquarium has so far cared for almost 120 of

the animals at its Quincy turtle hospital, the vast majority of which have been endangered Kemp's ridley turtles. Credit: Vanessa Kahn/New England Aquarium via AP

Last year, 75 [turtles](#) that stranded in Massachusetts were treated in Gulfport and New Orleans. Thirty were sent to the Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans, 25 to the Mississippi Aquarium and 20 to the Institute for Marine Mammal Studies in Gulfport.

The Audubon center isn't treating any [sea turtles](#) from this winter's strandings but is ready to do so if needed, spokeswoman Annie Kinler Matherne said.

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