

Rehabilitated dolphin leaves quarantine at Florida facility

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In this photo provided by the Florida Keys News Bureau, Linda Erb, vice president of animal care and training at Dolphin Research Center, feeds Ranger, a juvenile bottlenose dolphin, Thursday, May 12, 2022, in Marathon, Fla. The male was flown March 25, to the Florida Keys from the Texas State Aquarium Wildlife Rescue Center after being rescued in June 2021 from Goose Island State Park in Texas, suffering from a respiratory infection and dehydration

following his mother's death. Because the dolphin can't be released, National Marine Fisheries Service chose DRC to be his forever home. Credit: Andy Newman/Florida Keys News Bureau via AP

A rescued juvenile bottlenose dolphin, flown from Texas to the Florida Keys-based Dolphin Research Center seven weeks ago, was moved to the facility's primary dolphin lagoon Thursday.

The transfer marks the male marine mammal's final integration into a "forever family" of other permanent dolphin residents.

Ranger convalesced in a medical quarantine pool specially designed to increase his eating and weight, while strengthening both his [immune system](#) and his bond with human caregivers.

He was rescued a year ago after being discovered stranded in waters around Goose Island State Park in Texas, suffering from an underlying respiratory infection and dehydration following his mother's death.

After determining that Ranger hadn't learned enough eating and survival skills from his mother to successfully live in the wild, National Marine Fisheries chose Dolphin Research Center in Marathon as his forever home.

To safely maneuver Ranger from quarantine, DRC staff employed a special marine mammal stretcher and placed him into the natural Florida Bay water of the facility's main lagoon. Several dolphins in neighboring pools observed as Ranger speedily explored his new home, taking in their sonar signals for the first time since arriving at the [rehabilitation facility](#) in late March.



In this photo provided by the Florida Keys News Bureau, Ranger, a juvenile bottlenose dolphin, is weighed at Dolphin Research Center Thursday, May 12, 2022, in Marathon, Fla., during transfer from a medical pool to one of the facility's Florida Bay-fed lagoons. The male was flown March 25, to the Florida Keys from the Texas State Aquarium Wildlife Rescue Center after being rescued in June 2021 from Goose Island State Park in Texas, suffering from a respiratory infection and dehydration following his mother's death. Because the dolphin can't be released, National Marine Fisheries Service chose DRC to be his forever home. Credit: Andy Newman/Florida Keys News Bureau via AP



In this photo provided by the Florida Keys News Bureau, Dolphin Research Center staff transfer Ranger, a juvenile bottlenose dolphin, from a medical pool to one of the facility's Florida Bay-fed lagoons Thursday, May 12, 2022, in Marathon, Fla. The male was flown March 25, to the Florida Keys from the Texas State Aquarium Wildlife Rescue Center after being rescued in June 2021 from Goose Island State Park in Texas, suffering from a respiratory infection and dehydration following his mother's death. Because the dolphin can't be released, National Marine Fisheries Service chose DRC to be his forever home. Credit: Andy Newman/Florida Keys News Bureau via AP



In this photo provided by the Florida Keys News Bureau, Adam Keaton, director of animal care and habitat at Dolphin Research Center, moves Ranger, a juvenile bottlenose dolphin, off a stretcher and into one of the facility's Florida Bay-fed lagoons Thursday, May 12, 2022, in Marathon, Fla. The male was flown March 25, to the Florida Keys from the Texas State Aquarium Wildlife Rescue Center after being rescued in June 2021 from Goose Island State Park in Texas, suffering from a respiratory infection and dehydration following his mother's death. Because the dolphin can't be released, National Marine Fisheries Service chose DRC to be his forever home. Credit: Andy Newman/Florida Keys News Bureau via AP



In this photo provided by the Florida Keys News Bureau, Sarah Zigmond, left, of the Texas State Aquarium Wildlife Rescue Center, and Linda Erb of Dolphin Research Center hug as they watch Ranger adapt to his new home at DRC Thursday, May 12, 2022, in Marathon, Fla. The male was flown March 25, to the Florida Keys from the Texas State Aquarium Wildlife Rescue Center after being rescued in June 2021 from Goose Island State Park in Texas, suffering from a respiratory infection and dehydration following his mother's death. Because the dolphin can't be released, National Marine Fisheries Service chose DRC to be his forever home. Credit: Andy Newman/Florida Keys News Bureau via AP



In this photo provided by the Florida Keys News Bureau, Ranger, a juvenile male bottlenose dolphin, adapts to his new home at Dolphin Research Center Thursday, May 12, 2022, in Marathon, Fla. Ranger was flown March 25, to the Florida Keys from the Texas State Aquarium Wildlife Rescue Center after being rescued in June 2021 from Goose Island State Park in Texas, suffering from a respiratory infection and dehydration following his mother's death. Because the dolphin can't be released, National Marine Fisheries Service chose DRC to be his forever home. Credit: Andy Newman/Florida Keys News Bureau via AP



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It took less than an hour for Ranger to begin interacting and accepting food from Linda Erb, DRC's vice president of animal care and training.

"We were surprised he decided to eat within 45 minutes of getting in the pool," Erb said. "He hasn't heard dolphin sounds for over a year."

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