

Report on Dis-entanglement of *Tursiops truncatus* in Savannah Harbor
Entrance Channel
18 January, 2001
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The following events regarding the successful dis-entanglement of a Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) from the lines of a crab pot in the Savannah Harbor Entrance Channel on 18 January, 2001 are accurate to the best of my knowledge.

I was stationed on the bridge of the dredge ship B.E. Lindholm, of Weeks Marine as she was dredging stations -32+500 – -39+000 (the north 200' between buoys 8 and 10 on the red tow line). At 11:25 hours the bright orange float of a crab pot was seen at 32.00.472 N latitude and 80.47.697 W longitude (within 50 feet of red buoy # 10), faintly bobbing above and below the water's surface. Mark Freeman, the drag tender said, "I think there's a shark or something connected to it". When the dredge turned around to start the final outbound cut, the float came within 15 feet of the dredge and it was then, that observer Meghan Piercy positively identified a *Tursiops truncatus* which was seemingly connected to the float. The animal was struggling to get it's blow hole out of the water as it's tail was obviously being dragged downward. The animal appeared to be very weak and was listing slightly to its right side. It got a breath and submerged it's head once, before the thick fog which had just begun to engulf us, closed in and impeded any further observation.

The dredge continued outbound to the disposal site to dump the load. Within three minutes of the positive identification, observer Meghan Piercy called Chris Slay of Coastwise Consulting and the Mate, Joe Purcell concurrently called the U.S. Coast Guard to report the plight of this *Tursiops*. Chris Slay immediately notified Barb Zoodsma of the Georgia DNR, who in turn notified Mike Scarboro. Scarboro runs dolphin tours as well as the Lazaretto Creek Marina on Tybee Island, where Weeks Marine keeps their crew boat the *Bayou Teche*. Mike Scarboro called Mike Ward, project manager for Weeks Marine. Mike Ward called the dredge to ascertain the exact position of the *Tursiops*. Barb Zoodsma called Meghan Piercy to report that Mike Scarboro was going to come out and assist the animal. Meghan Piercy reported to her that the *Bayou Teche* was leaving the dock. Mike Scarboro was on the *Bayou Teche*. We were both under the impression that 2 boats were responding, when in fact, there was only one boat and three men; Mike Ward, Mike Scarboro and Johnny Pittman (the crew boat operator).

While the dredge was dumping load # 148, the three men on the *Bayou Teche* located the *Tursiops* in distress, still near buoy # 10. Mike Ward told the following to Meghan Piercy. They pulled the *Tursiops* tail up on the stern of the crew boat and cut loose the line which was tangled all around its tail. The animal had no visible external wounds. There were approximately 15 knots in the line that was connected to a crab pot, which was hoisted onto the *Bayou Teche*. When the *Tursiops* was freed (approximately 12:40 and 1:15 hours after it was first sighted) it remained on the surface, lying on its side in what appeared to be an extremely weakened state. The *Bayou Teche* remained near the *Tursiops* to keep watch on it. The animal remained on the surface, listed, for approximately 40 minutes, occasionally rolling over to take a breath. Finally, at approximately 13:20, the *Tursiops* dove, then surfaced at the stern of the boat. In Mike Ward's words, "It stuck its head up out of the water and looked right at me. Then it dove down and took off".

As the *Tursiops* was recovering under the watchful eye of the men on the Bayou Teche, observers Meghan Piercy and Chris Carroll spotted a very tight knit group of about 7 other *Tursiops truncatus*. The group was located approximately .25 miles to the east of buoy #9 and roughly the same distance from the entangled dolphin. They surfaced in a line, 5 abreast with at least 2 stragglers. This was the first time this pod was seen during this event.

When the crew boat ended their vigil, they came over to the dredge to pick up the USACOE inspector. I (Meghan Piercy) looked over the side and saw the crab pot on the stern of the vessel. It appeared to be undamaged and contained approximately 15 Blue Crabs. Mike Scarboro took photographs of the incident.

Feel free to contact me with any questions.

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