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## Failed rescue: 2 beached whales die off Fla. shore

By J. PAT CARTER (AP) – 11 hours ago

HOLLYWOOD, Fla. — Rescuers failed in a frantic bid to save a mother whale and her baby after the pair ran aground off a South Florida beach Monday as hundreds looked on, many in tears. Neither animal survived despite efforts to keep them alive with moist towels and umbrellas to protect their drying skin from the scorching sun.

A team of marine mammal specialists tried to save the distressed whales after they became trapped in shallow waters at Hollywood beach, just north of Miami. The mother died and the calf had to be euthanized, authorities said.

Swimmers spotted the whales around 1 p.m. in waist-deep water and tried to encourage them to head back toward deeper water. The whales briefly swam away, but returned and headed toward the beach.

The mother — which experts from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration identified as a beaked whale — was about 10 to 12 feet long. The calf was about half her size.

Some placed towels on the whales trying to keep them moist, and volunteers waded into the water and held umbrellas over the animals in hopes of further shielding them from the sun as a summertime crowd of about 300 tourists and residents looked at the somber scene.

After the mother died, the calf was brought next to her and euthanized by a NOAA marine mammal specialist.

"I have tears in my eyes," said Eileen Vulpis of Coral Springs. "Everyone here is upset, everyone really thought they were going to try to save the baby."

Blair Mase, a stranding coordinator for NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, said beaked whales normally do not survive in captivity, and that the calf would have been unable to live without its mother.

Dozens of people with video and still cameras waded into the water, trying to get closer to the whales as authorities kept others back behind yellow police tape. A police helicopter hovered nearby.

Experts will perform necropsies on both whales, Mase said.

Mase said whales can beach themselves for a variety of reasons, including climate conditions, disorientation after hearing a loud noise, sickness and parasites.

There are normally one or two so-called "beaching events" of beaked whales a year in South Florida, according to NOAA experts. But they noted it's still traumatic for beachgoers to witness.

Some in the crowd were parents trying to explain what was happening to their young children.

"Whales tear at our heartstrings," said Mase.

*Associated Press writer Tamara Lush contributed to this report from Miami.*

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