



MERCURY NEWS FILE PHOTOGRAPH

Catalina Bob gets aid in Santa Cruz after beaching himself in May.

Animals

Twice-rescued dolphin monitored by satellite

BY CATHIE CALVERT
Mercury News Staff Writer

Catalina Bob, the ailing dolphin twice rescued from Monterey Bay — the first time on Easter Sunday — is back in the swim and charting new waters for marine scientists.

The common dolphin, who called Santa Cruz home for more than two months, was released into the ocean by Sea World in San Diego last month

wearing a satellite transmitter on his dorsal fin, Robert Irion, spokesman at University of California, Santa Cruz, said Wednesday.

It is hoped that the space-age tracking system will shed new light on the habits of common dolphins, he said.

The transmitter, which doesn't interfere with the dolphin's swimming ability, sends

See **DOLPHIN**, Page 4B

Twice-rescued Catalina Bob now monitored by satellite

■ DOLPHIN

from Page 1B

signals to a satellite.

Irion said researchers hope to track the dolphin's course for three or four months until the transmitter fails. It is designed to corrode in salt water and fall off.

So far everything looks great for the 250-pound cetacean, said Phil Thorson, a researcher at Hubbs Sea World Research Institute in San Diego, who heads the tracking project.

Other marine mammals have been tracked by satellite, but Bob is pioneering the process for common dolphins, said Orion, who came to know the once-ailing creature when the dolphin was recovering at the UC Long Marine Laboratory in Santa Cruz.

Satellite tracking is a big improvement over using radio transmissions for boats and planes to pick up, Orion said.

"This is a very good way to gauge the success of dolphin release and ascertain that the dolphin is still alive . . . which offers a measure of whether it was worth rescuing the animal in the first place," he said.

Scientists at Long Marine Laboratory estimate Bob is 10 to 12 years old, which means he ought to survive at least another 10 years if he stays healthy, Orion said.

Bob was last sighted Monday near the Morro Bay-San Simeon area, researcher Thorson said.

Scientists infer that he is in good health, based on the distance he's traveled.

Catalina Bob first became stranded April 3 (Easter Sunday) near Morro Bay. He was transported to Marine World Africa USA in Vallejo and eventually to the Long Marine Lab in Santa Cruz. From there he was taken to San Diego's Sea World where he was released Aug. 25.

Earlier this year, Bob's initial release lasted only a couple of days, with the dolphin coming ashore again on May 11. He was kept in Santa Cruz until he was taken to Sea World in San Diego.

Orion said that folks at the Santa Cruz marine lab are delighted by the good news on Catalina Bob.

"They are very grateful to see Catalina Bob get another chance at life in the ocean."