

# Scientists Study Amazon Dolphins in Effort to Prevent Deaths

今回はブラジルのテフェ湖でのイルカ研究に関する記事です。地域ではイルカの数に深刻な影響が出ており、研究者たちは詳しい健康調査を行って原因を探ろうとしています。原因を特定するために、毒素の有無も確認されています。英語では「毒素」をtoxinと言い、remove toxins（毒素を取り除く）のように使います。また、形容詞ではtoxicとなり、toxic substances（有害物質）などでよく用いられます。こうした調査は、環境の変化が生き物に与える影響を知る手がかりになります。あなたの身近な川や海では、気候や環境の変化が生き物にどんな影響を与えていると思いますか？講師と話してみましょう。



## 1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

About 200 freshwater dolphins were found dead in Lake Tefé of the Amazon River in Brazil during a period of severe dry weather last year.

That is why a team of biologists, animal doctors, and fishermen [temporarily](#) captured some river dolphins recently to study their health. The researchers hope the findings will help protect the dolphins from another weather disaster.

One of the captured dolphins was a female with her [offspring](#) nearby. Fishermen were careful not to injure her and kept her close to her offspring to avoid stressing the animals.

"She relaxed and we could do all the tests. She appeared in good health," said project leader Miriam Marmontel. She is a researcher at the Mamirauá Institute of Sustainable Development based in Tefé, Brazil. The organization planned the temporary capture of up to 20 dolphins.

The team took blood from the animals and performed other medical tests. The work included removing a small amount of fat to see if harmful chemicals were in the dolphin's body. They also put microchips in the animals to follow their movements.

The Solimões River feeds water into Lake Tefé. Unusually dry weather last year caused water levels in the river to drop. As a result, the water became warmer than usual. Thousands of fish also died in the Amazon rivers because of a lack of oxygen in the water.

Many Amazon river dolphins are the color pink. They are found only in the rivers of South America, and they are among only a few kinds of freshwater dolphins still living in the world. Because they reproduce slowly, threats to their environment can more easily reduce their populations.

Marmontel said researchers hope to better understand what caused last year's deaths, so that experts and officials can react faster to the effects of this year's dry weather.

"We aim to learn more about the health of the dolphins at a time when water begins to go down and temperatures start to rise, so we can identify the changes and know whether they are due to higher temperatures or a [toxin](#) or pollutant in the water," she told Reuters.

The river dolphin research project received financial support from the National Marine Mammal Foundation of California in the United States. That organization's researchers helped examine the dolphins using ultrasound technology.

Marmontel said most of the dolphins that died last year were in Lake Tefé. The lake is very close to the Solimões River.

The lake's waters reached 40.9 degrees Celsius during the 2023 dry season, more than 10 degrees higher than the average for that time of year. The water is now at 30 degrees Celsius, said Ayan Fleischmann. He is a geosciences researcher at the Mamirauá Institute.

Environmental activists have [blamed](#) climate change for the severe dry weather that made the river water warmer than normal. However, El Niño, the [periodic](#) and natural Pacific Ocean warming weather event could also have brought about last year's dry weather in the Amazon.

Bruno Kelly reported this story for Reuters. Andrew Smith adapted the report for VOA Learning English.

## 2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

**1. temporarily (adv.) for a short time; not permanently**

The family will be staying in a shelter temporarily while they find a new apartment.

**2. offspring (n.) children (used when talking about biology)**

Your offspring have some of the same physical characteristics that you do.

**3. toxin (n.) a harmful material; a poison**

Scientists found toxins in the soil near the garbage dump.

**4. blame (v.) to claim that someone or something caused a problem**

Officials blamed a broken wire on the house fire.

**5. periodic (adj.) regular; happening after a set amount of time**

A car needs to have periodic oil changes to keep the engine running smoothly.

## 3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. What kinds of tests did the researchers in Brazil perform on the dolphins?
2. What happened to Lake Tefé? How did it affect the dolphins?
3. What two different reasons do people give for the heating?
4. How has climate change affected the sea life in your country or area? What about life in freshwater lakes and rivers?
5. How has climate change affected the fishing industry and seafood business in your country or area? Do you personally notice the effects?