

# Portions of the Gulf are So Toxic that Dolphins, Fish, Crabs, Stingrays and Other Animals are “Trying to Crawl Out of the Water”

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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Theme: [Environment](#)

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On Friday, Inter Press Service [reported](#):

Danny Ross, a commercial fisherman from Biloxi... said he has watched horseshoe crabs trying to crawl out of the water, and other marine life like stingrays and flounder trying to escape the water as well. He believes this is because the water is hypoxic. ...

David Wallis, another fisherman from Biloxi... [said] “I’ve seen crabs crawling out of the water in the middle of the day. This is going to be affecting us far into the future.”

This has been a common occurrence since BP started spilling oil into the Gulf.

The Post Chronicle [noted](#) on August 12th:

Some local fishermen say they are seeing strange behavior by marine life — mullets, crabs and other creatures which normally stay well under water have been sighted congregating on the surface — and they relate this to the spill.

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“It looks like all of the sea life is trying to get out of the water,” said Alabama fisherman Stan Fournier. “In the 40 years I have been on these waters I’ve never seen anything like this before.”

The Advocate-Messenger [pointed out](#) on July 31st:

Besides potentially maintaining higher levels of toxicity, the oil trapped in the water column is also suffocating the ocean, causing radical drops in oxygen levels never before seen, [Monty Graham, a biological oceanographer specializing in plankton at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab on the coast of Alabama] said.

Following the oil and methane spill, Graham’s measurements of oxygen levels in the waters where he studies plankton dropped to two to three times lower than normal, to a level so low most animals cannot tolerate it.

That suffocating effect is why all kinds of sea animals have been showing up in

greater and greater numbers, closer and closer to shore — they can't breathe in their normal habitats anymore.

And AP [wrote](#) in June:

Dolphins and sharks are showing up in surprisingly shallow water just off the Florida coast. Mulletts, crabs, rays and small fish congregate by the thousands off an Alabama pier. Birds covered in oil are crawling deep into marshes, never to be seen again.

Marine scientists studying the effects of the BP disaster are seeing some strange — and troubling — phenomena.

Fish and other wildlife are fleeing the oil out in the Gulf and clustering in cleaner waters along the coast. But that is not the hopeful sign it might appear to be, researchers say.

The animals' presence close to shore means their usual habitat is badly polluted, and the crowding could result in mass die-offs as fish run out of oxygen. Also, the animals could easily get devoured by predators.

"A parallel would be: Why are the wildlife running to the edge of a forest on fire? There will be a lot of fish, sharks, turtles trying to get out of this water they detect is not suitable," said Larry Crowder, a Duke University marine biologist.

Tragically, when sea animals crowd into shallow water in an attempt to escape pollution, they can quickly use up all available oxygen.

As the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection [writes](#):

The warmer water is the less dissolved oxygen it is able to hold. If the fish schooled very tightly in shallows very close to shore for any reason, they may have simply used up all the oxygen that was available to them and died."

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