

Raccoon Dog Rescued From Ice Drifting Out to Sea in Russian Far East

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Russian rescue workers managed to save a frightened raccoon dog from a melting slab of ice as it drifted out to sea off the far-eastern island of Sakhalin, the Emergency Situations Ministry announced.

Patrolling the coastline after the ministry warned ice fishermen to exercise caution during this unusually warm winter, officers of the ministry's small boat inspectorate noticed in the twilight "a dark dot moving from one side of the drift ice to another," the ministry said in a statement released Tuesday.

As they came closer, they found that the dark spot was in fact a small raccoon dog marooned on a slab of ice that had drifted about 10 meters from the shoreline.

Raccoon dogs, which are native to east Asia, can be avid swimmers. But judging from this one's wet fur, its attempts to get back to dry land had been unsuccessful, the ministry's

statement said.

A rescue worker slipped on a wetsuit and ventured out to save the dog, but in a fit of panic the animal fled to the far end of the ice slab. Pushing down on his side of the slab, the man managed to get the dog to slide into his arms, the statement said.

The rescuer workers brought the raccoon dog to a warm place to dry its fur, then returned it to the wild, the ministry said.

Though raccoon dogs resemble raccoons, the two are not closely related. The raccoon dog is a member of the canid family of wolves and foxes.

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