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Seadragons & Seahorses to Open May 17 at Birch Aquarium

The aquarium's newest exhibition will feature one of the largest seadragon habitats in the world.



La Jolla, California, Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego will open *Seadragons & Seahorses*, a new permanent exhibition that celebrates the care and conservation of these unique creatures.

Seadragons & Seahorses is the largest indoor aquarium addition since the aquarium's opening in 1992 and will be home to Weedy and Leafy Seadragons, as well as several species of seahorses and pipefish.

The centerpiece of the exhibition will be one of the largest seadragon habitats in the world. The 18-foot-wide, 9-foot-tall exhibit will hold 5,375 gallons of water — that's equivalent to 70 bathtubs! More than being a stunning display, the habitat has been designed to create an ideal environment to breed seadragons. Birch Aquarium hopes to be the first aquarium to successfully breed Leafy Seadragons in captivity.

"People love ocean animals, especially seadragons and seahorses. We invite our guests to draw closer to these wondrous fish, to appreciate their amazing qualities and their value as part of our natural world," said Nan Renner, the aquarium's senior director of learning design and innovation.

Seadragons & Seahorses will immerse aquarium guests into the underwater lives of seahorses and seadragons, while giving a peek into the work Birch Aquarium's renowned Husbandry Team is doing to ensure that these species survive into the future.

Dappled light, dramatic photography, and larger-than-life imagery set the scene as guests learn how to observe these animals the way scientists do: by noticing the unique features that distinguish individual animals and identifying courtship and mating behaviors that will make our breeding program a success.

"Birch Aquarium's husbandry team has been committed to breeding seahorses and seadragons for 25 years," said Jennifer Nero Moffatt, the aquarium's senior director of animal care, science and conservation.

"Seahorses and seadragons alike are threatened by human impact in the wild and our conservation program aims to relieve pressures, provide sanctuary and promote research of wild and captive animals to help conserve these charismatic creatures."

The propagation of these species is increasingly vital due to human impacts and climate change's warming oceans. Joining our partners in the [Association of Zoos and Aquariums \(AZA\)](#), Birch Aquarium's seahorse and seadragon conservation efforts support Species Survival Plans (SSP), cooperatively managed programs that oversee the population management of select species within AZA member institutions and enhance conservation of species in the wild. Each SSP Program coordinates the individual activities of participating member institutions through a variety of species conservation, research, husbandry, management, and educational initiatives.

This exhibition is made possible through generous donations from the community. If you are interested in learning more or supporting *Seadragons & Seahorses*, please contact John Matthews at j5matthews@ucsd.edu or (858)822-5803.

Construction has already begun on *Seadragons & Seahorses*, which replaces the *Infinity Cube* installation. Once open, the exhibition will be included in the cost of Birch Aquarium admission, which is \$19.50 for adults, \$15 for children (3-17). [Annual memberships are also available](#). For more information, [visit visit aquarium.ucsd.edu](http://visit.aquarium.ucsd.edu).

About Birch Aquarium at Scripps Birch Aquarium at Scripps is the public exploration center for the world-renowned Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego. Perched on a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean, the aquarium features more than 60 habitats of fishes and invertebrates from the cold waters of the Pacific Northwest to the tropical waters of Mexico and the western Pacific. An interactive museum showcases research discoveries by Scripps scientists on climate, Earth and ocean science, and features interactive elements. Accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Birch Aquarium has an annual attendance of more than 470,000, including 50,000 school children.

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