

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***Photos are available.**

Media Contact:

Caitlin Scully
cscully@ucsd.edu
(o)858.534.5037

Birch Aquarium's New Tours Take Guests Behind the Scenes for the First Time

Birch Aquarium's new Behind-the-scenes tour immerse guests into the world of seahorse conservation

La Jolla, Calif. (Nov. 14, 2019)—For the first time ever, Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego is taking guests behind the scenes. New tours kick-off November 12, and showcase the aquarium's groundbreaking work breeding and caring for seahorses.

The "Growing Up Seahorse" Behind-the-Scenes Tour immerses guests into the world of Birch Aquarium's animal care team. Participants are first taken on a guided tour through seahorse exhibits to learn about the diversity and conservation status of these unique fish. They then head behind the scenes to learn the details about how Birch Aquarium's experts care for and breed seahorses. The tour culminates with a visit to see tiny baby seahorses in the breeding room.

"People often don't think about what type of food an animal with a mouth smaller than a pin-head needs to eat. Or how to care for a baby the size of a grain of rice," said Lisa Gilfillan, education specialist and tour leader at Birch Aquarium. "There are so many eye-opening experiences on this tour allowing guests to forge a personal connection with seahorses. We hope these connections inspire guests to take the next step to protect seahorses, their habitats, and our ocean world."

Birch Aquarium is a leader in the field of seahorse breeding conservation. The aquarium has been breeding seahorses for more than 25 years and has shipped approximately 5,000 seahorses to more than 100 facilities around the world, including South Africa, Guam, China, and many countries in Europe. The Seahorse Breeding Program is part of the aquarium's dedication to conservation and participation in the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Species Survival Plans (SSPs). The AZA organizes Species Survival Plans with institutions around the country to increase the number of captive seahorses to reduce pressure on wild populations.

"Within our population we currently have Leafy Seadragons, Pot-bellied, Lined, and Spotted Seahorses as well as Banggai Cardinalfish that are listed within existing SSPs," said Jennifer Nero Moffatt, the aquarium's senior director of animal care, science and conservation. "SSP programs are growing every year and increasing in diversity. Supporting breeding programs with our colleagues around the world is critical to the sustainability of our animals and our oceans."

The [Growing Up Seahorse tour](#) runs daily at 10:30 a.m. and advanced registration is recommended. Tickets are \$30 per person for aquarium members, and \$35 per person plus general admission for non-members. Tickets can be purchased [online](#), by calling 858-534-3474, or in person at the aquarium's Visitor Services Office. Please read the [FAQ](#) for age, mobility, and clothing requirements. Birch Aquarium plans to expand behind-the-scenes opportunities in the future.

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.

###