



UC San Diego
SCRIPPS INSTITUTION OF OCEANOGRAPHY

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[*Photos Available Here***](#)**

Birch Aquarium Reopening Outdoors-Only

The aquarium will open to members on February 26, to the general public February 27.

La Jolla, CA (February 22, 2021)—Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego today announced that it will be opening outdoors-only beginning Saturday, February 27, with a special members-only day on Friday, February 26. The aquarium’s outdoor spaces have been enhanced with new animals and activities, and are open to guests with discounted ticket prices.

Indoor areas including the Hall of Fishes, will be closed until restrictions are lifted.

“We are delighted to reopen Birch Aquarium with family friendly outdoor-only experiences,” said Executive Director Harry Helling. “Guests can safely enjoy new animal encounters, exhibits, and art installations added to our outdoor spaces, all with sweeping views of Scripps Oceanography and the beautiful Pacific.”

All of the aquarium’s outdoor areas have been activated to offer a variety of outdoor activities for guests to explore and enjoy. A map highlighting all of the open areas is [available online](#).

Activities include:

Entrance Courtyard

- **Giant Blue Octopus by Jessica Ling Findley:** Grab an octopus selfie with our giant inflatable octopus and be sure to use #BirchAquarium on your social profiles.
- **Observe + Wonder:** Guests will see specimens and art inspired by invertebrates from local artist, Siena McKim. Put your observation skills to the test as you use your scientist eye to connect with and explore the wonders of the ocean.

Preuss Tide Pool Plaza

- **Marine Protected Area Touch Experience:** Guests touch local animals, including small sharks and rays, sea hares and snails, while learning about Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).
- **South Tide Pool Touch Experience:** We'll bring tide pooling to you by providing a chance to touch La Jolla locals, like anemones, urchins, and sea cucumbers.
- **Artist / Scientists in Residence:** See our resident artist / scientists at work! Join Siena McKim and Brian Gibson on Tide Pool Plaza as they bring art to life. [The artists' schedules will be posted to Birch Aquarium's website when available.](#)

The Shelia Marie Davis Galleria

- **Kelp Cam on the Big Screen:** As you head from the Entry Courtyard to Tide Pool Plaza, check out what's going on in our Giant Kelp Forest Exhibit up on the big screen.

Nigella Hillgarth Education Plaza

- **Oddities Outdoors:** It's a Bird, It's a Plane, it's a ... Giant Tube Worm? Discover some amazing specimens through comic book-inspired panels that highlight the astonishing adaptations (aka super powers) of ocean species.
- **Whale Fall Exploration:** Learn what happens after a whale falls to the ocean floor by exploring whale bones and invertebrate specimens alongside our Wyland mural.

Robert Smargon Exhibit Court

- **NEW! Growing Up Seahorse:** New to the outdoors-only lineup is an experience that gives guests a look into the diverse world of seahorses. Check out juvenile and adult seahorses, learn about Birch Aquarium's renowned breeding program, and understand what it takes to care for these unusual fish.
- **Coral Reef Animal Touch Experience:** Dip your hands into the warm waters of a tropical reef and touch animals like cleaner shrimp, hermit crabs, sea stars and even young epaulette sharks.
- **Winter Migrators Tracking:** Have you ever wondered who passes through our waters during the winter season? Guests will learn about wintertime ocean species that migrate along the San Diego coastline and be able to log what they see!
- **Shark Poetry by Dovi Kacev:** Adjacent to our live sharks, learn about sharks through beautiful illustrations and poetry from Dovi Kacev.
- **Local Sharks:** Explore the diversity of the local shark and ray species right off the La Jolla coast by checking out shark jaws, teeth and other specimens.
- **Shark Shores:** Come face-to-face with La Jolla's legendary Leopard Sharks and other species of elasmobranchs (sharks and rays) at *Shark Shores*. The large outdoor exhibit allows you to experience the sandy bottomed habitat of La Jolla Shores without getting wet!
- **Life Starts Small: Nursery Animals:** Observe young animals from nearby cool temperate waters, like clumps of mussels, swell shark egg cases and juvenile sharks, sand crabs,

juvenile zebra perch and garibaldi, gorgonians, limpets, jellies, decorator crabs, seagrasses, and nudibranchs.

Advanced reservations for a specific time and date are required to visit Birch Aquarium, even for members. The aquarium will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily and all outdoor activities are included in the discounted admission price, which is \$16.50 for adults, \$12 for children. Reservations [are available online only](#). Annual [Memberships](#) are also available.

For a limited time, Birch Aquarium has a special Buy One, Get One Half-Price offer on all tickets. Guests may use the code BIRCHOUTDOORS at checkout to receive the offer.

More information, including safety protocols and other important details for guests planning their next visit, can be found on the [Know Before You Visit page](#). The aquarium Gift Shop and Splash Cafe by the French Gourmet will also be open with enhanced safety measures. For more information [visit aquarium.ucsd.edu](http://visit.aquarium.ucsd.edu).

About Birch Aquarium at Scripps

Birch Aquarium at Scripps is the public exploration center for Scripps Oceanography. Perched on a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean, Birch Aquarium features the groundbreaking work of Scripps Oceanography and UC San Diego scientists as well as conservation breeding programs, and interactive exhibits. Birch Aquarium's mission is to connect understanding to protecting our ocean planet, which the aquarium achieves by engaging, hands-on learning opportunities for nearly 500,000 guests as well as more than 50,000 pre-K-12 students each year. Birch Aquarium also offers a variety of virtual events and activities including [Virtual School and Youth Group Programs](#), [Virtual After School Series](#), [Virtual Camps](#), [Unique Virtual Experiences](#) and [Virtual Perspectives on Ocean Science Lectures](#).

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