

Press Release

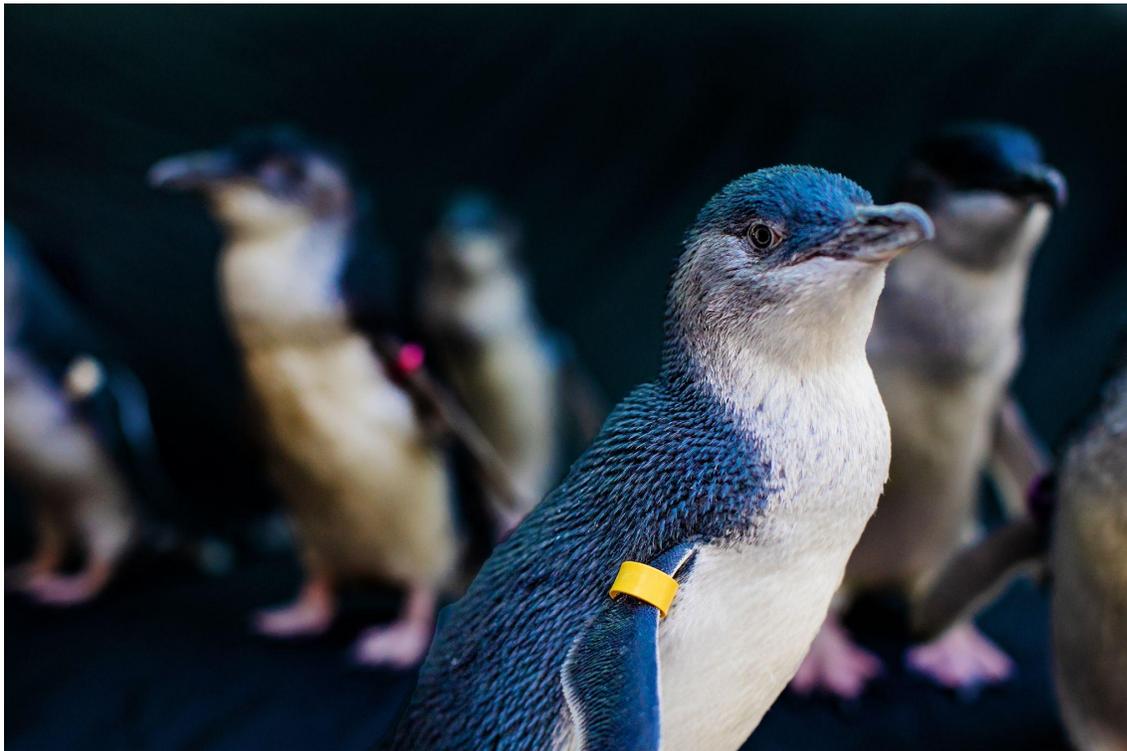
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Media Contact: Leslie Luna
lluna@ucsd.edu | 858.717.2499

Big [Little] News: Birch Aquarium Announces Opening Date for *Beyster Family Little Blue Penguins*

The new habitat opens July 12, 2022.



La Jolla, CA (May 19, 2022) — Today Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego announced July 12, 2022 as the opening date for *Beyster Family Little Blue Penguins* — the biggest addition to Birch Aquarium at Scripps in 30 years.

Beyster Family Little Blue Penguins follows the world's smallest penguins on their journey from hatchlings to adults, highlighting the challenges they face in a changing climate while celebrating the features that make Little Blues so unique (and adorable).

Little Blue Penguins are the smallest species of penguin — less than 12 inches tall, and weighing just 2 to 3 pounds — and are known for their unique blue color, and their big personalities. Birch Aquarium will be the only aquarium in the Western U.S. to house these gregarious seabirds.

“Many people don't realize that not all penguins live in the ice and snow. Little Blues are from Australia and New Zealand, where the climate is surprisingly similar to ours,” said Kayla Strate, lead penguin aquarist. “We are so proud to be able to bring this species for the first time to the West Coast.”

The 2,900-square-foot exhibit is named in honor of a \$1 million gift from the Beyster Family — who are long-time supporters of Scripps Institution of Oceanography and Birch Aquarium — and will include an 18,000-gallon pool where guests will observe the penguins socializing, interacting and nest building. The exhibit also includes a small amphitheater for guests to observe birds swimming, and a discovery portal where the aquarium's youngest guests can get up close to Little Blue Penguins on land and inside their nesting burrows. Upon opening, there will be 15 Little Blue Penguins in the habitat.

“We are so very excited to be adding this amazing new experience to Birch Aquarium at Scripps. The new habitat will allow us to contribute to an international Species Survival Plan and create a fun and engaging guest experience,” said Executive Director, Harry Helling. “Little Blue Penguins will be wonderful ambassadors that can help us to engage our community more deeply and further our mission to connect understanding to protecting our ocean planet.”

Little Blue Penguins are native to the coastal dunes and rocky shores of Southern Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand and are part of the [Association of Zoos and Aquariums' \(AZA\)](#) collaborative international program called Species Survival Plans (SSP). Each SSP Program coordinates the individual activities of participating member institutions through a variety of species, research, husbandry, management and educational initiatives.

Though penguins are common in zoos and aquariums, only a handful of AZA institutions have Little Blue Penguins. They are Dallas World Aquarium, the Bronx Zoo, Adventure Aquarium, Louisville Zoo and the Cincinnati Zoo.

Celebrations for the opening of *Beyster Family Little Blue Penguins* begin June 30 with a preview event for Birch Aquarium donors. There will be a ribbon-cutting on July 12 when the exhibit opens to the public, as well as special events for members, media and other groups. Behind-the-scenes penguin tours will also be available to the public beginning July 26 with special access for Birch Aquarium members beginning July 19.

Beyster Family Little Blue Penguins is included in the cost of general admission to Birch Aquarium which is \$24.95 for adults and \$19.95 for children ages 3-17. [Annual memberships are also available](#). Advanced reservations are required for all guests, including members. Visit aquarium.ucsd.edu for more information or to make a reservation.

About Birch Aquarium at Scripps

Birch Aquarium at Scripps is the public exploration center for Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego. 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. Visit aquarium.ucsd.edu for more information.

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