

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

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

Birch Aquarium Announces Pregnant Weedy Seadragon

A rare egg transfer was made last night, marking the first time eggs have been transferred in the Seadragons & Seahorses habitat.



La Jolla, CA (January 9, 2023) — In what is an extremely rare occurrence, Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego is announcing the first successful transfer of eggs from a female seadragon to a male in the *Seadragons & Seahorses* habitat, which opened in May 2019.

“We’re elated to be able to witness this at the aquarium. It’s extremely rare for seadragons to breed in captivity so this is a monumental milestone for all of our staff,” said Jenn Nero Moffatt, Senior Director of Animal Care, Science and Conservation. “We have been working with

seadragons since 1996. Since then, we have learned so much about caring for these creatures and invested a lot in our breeding program. From the lighting to the rockwork; everything has been strategically designed with breeding seadragons in mind.”

Like seahorses, seadragon males — not females — are responsible for carrying eggs. An egg transfer is quick, but occurs only after the seadragons participate in an elaborate courtship “dance.” The male and female mirror each other, often with their tails curled away from their mate, and spin together snout-to-snout moving up and down in the water column. This dance is essential for the successful transfer of eggs from the female onto the male’s tail, where he then fertilizes and hosts the eggs.

Birch Aquarium’s seadragon will carry the eggs on his tail for four to six weeks until they are ready to hatch. Only a small percentage of eggs will develop. The aquarium’s Husbandry Team is keeping a close eye on the pregnant seadragon. He is doing well and can be seen up close in *Seadragons & Seahorses*, though he might move behind the scenes closer to the hatching date.

Seadragons & Seahorses features one of the largest seadragon habitats in the world. It was designed to create an ideal environment to breed seadragons. The stunning display is 18-feet wide, 9-foot-tall and holds 5,375 gallons of water.

Though this is the first time a seadragon has laid eggs on the public side of the aquarium, Birch Aquarium has previously seen success behind-the-scenes with the birth of two Weedy Seadragon babies in February 2020 when it became one of only a handful of aquariums in the world to breed these mysterious animals.

Endemic to southern Australia, Weedy Seadragons face challenges in the wild including climate change, warming oceans and compromised habitats.

In partnership with Scripps Oceanography scientists, Birch Aquarium has been studying weedy seadragons both in the wild and in our state-of-the art captive breeding facility to alleviate pressure on wild populations. Visit aquarium.ucsd.edu to learn more about our Seadragon Breeding Program.

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.

###