



New England
Aquarium

blue

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*Staffers journey to
South Africa to
help penguins*

*The Marine Animal
Rescue Team saves
critically endangered
stranded sea turtles*

*Local women form
an ocean advocacy
organization*

Members' Magazine

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Ocean Soul

By Brian Skerry



Adam Kennedy and Kerry McNally tend to an ailing turtle.



Katie (left) and Kerry release turtles that were rehabilitated at the Animal Care Center in Quincy. "It's incredible to basically bring an animal back to life," Kerry says.

Catch up with the latest from the Marine Animal Rescue Team on their blog. www.neaq.org/blogs



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\$5 will be charged to your wireless bill or deducted from your prepaid balance. Message and data rates may apply. Text STOP to 20222 to cancel or text HELP for help. Service is available on most carriers. All purchases must be authorized by the account holder. Terms and conditions are available online. www.hmgf.org/t

As a boy, *National Geographic* photographer and Aquarium Explorer in Residence Brian Skerry was fascinated by the sea, but it wasn't until he attended an event with underwater photographers that he had an epiphany: "I had always wanted to explore the oceans, but I now understood how I would do this. I would do it with a camera," he said.

A major focus of Brian's work in recent years has been to produce stories that both celebrate the sea and raise awareness about its problems. Brian says that the title of his new book, *Ocean Soul*, came to him when he realized that what he enjoys more than anything is making pictures that evoke the true essence of an animal, celebrate nature and reveal magical, natural moments.

The book showcases his stunning photography and describes his adventurous life as an ocean soul, someone whose work has evolved through the years, from striving only to capture nature's beauty to a journalistic focus on the many threats facing our oceans and marine wildlife as well.



Photo: Brian Skerry

Smoothtail devil ray (*Mobula munkiana*) leaping in shallow waters off the coast of Mexico in 2005.

Along with his jaw-droppingly beautiful photographs of bluefin and yellowfin tuna, hammerheads, whale sharks, manatees, reef sharks and other stunning creatures, there are also heart-breaking photos of sharks and rays entangled in fishing nets and harp seal hunts in Canada. And beside the photographs, Brian's text tells the story of the ocean he loves.



Ocean Soul is a gripping portrait of the ocean as a place of beauty and mystery, a place in trouble and, ultimately, a place of hope that will rebound with the proper attention and care.

—Ann Cortissoz

A Trip to the Aquarium Inspires a Movement

A day at the Aquarium gives families plenty to talk about at the dinner table: Did you see the sea lions playing together? What was your favorite animal in the Giant Ocean Tank? How did it feel to touch that cownose ray? For a pair of local moms, a family trip to the Aquarium inspired a movement.



Barbara Burgess (left), Brian Skerry and Donna Hazard

“We left the Aquarium that day concerned about the oceans. We know our generation is responsible for so much of the damage and stressors being put on our oceans today,” said Barbara Burgess, longtime member of the Aquarium’s Board of Overseers and co-founder of Women Working for the Oceans (W₂O). “We wanted to do something that would make the oceans healthier for our children’s generation

while also teaching our children that people can help and can make a difference.”

Barbara and Donna Hazard, both of Weston, partnered to start W₂O about a year ago. The organization aims to educate women about the challenges facing oceans while inspiring them to take actions that can lead to improved ocean health and a sustainable blue planet. It started simply with an email sent to their friends inviting them to learn more about the oceans.

“We received an incredibly enthusiastic response to that email.

Women want to know the facts, and so Barbara and I want to raise the bar on the type of information that is getting out there so we can all make educated choices for our families,” Donna explained.

Donna and Barbara quickly formed a dedicated steering committee and hit the ground running with a W₂O Facebook page and website. Through these media and periodic gatherings, they empower supporters with important information about the sea and ocean conservation. For example, on their website they encourage women to contact their senators in support of the Senate Oceans Caucus. The goal of hosting events with members is to educate women and inspire them to be vocal about what they’ve learned.

Last fall in the Simons IMAX Theatre, Aquarium Explorer in Residence Brian Skerry spoke to W₂O members about bycatch, overfishing, climate change, acidification and many other issues affecting our oceans. The award-winning *National Geographic* photographer used poignant underwater pictures of right whales, sharks and coral reefs to illustrate these threats.

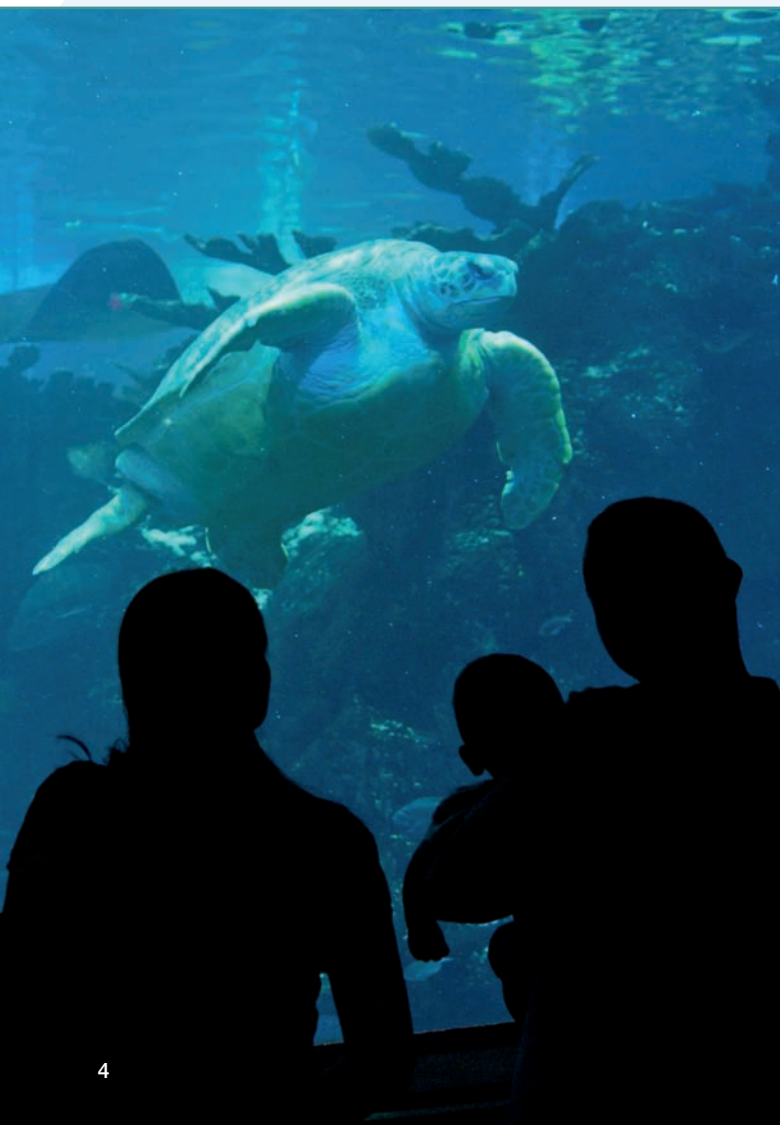
In addressing the audience of women of all ages and professions from across the Boston area that day, Barbara singled out a group of students visiting from Dartmouth College’s marine policy program, “You are our future. We will do what we can to raise awareness, and together we can help make changes that matter for our oceans.”

—Emily Bauernfeind

Learn more about W₂O online.
www.womenworkingforoceans.org



Myrtle the green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)



—Emily Bauernfeind

Going the Distance for African Penguins

From maintenance workers to box office staff to biologists, people who work at the Aquarium are genuinely interested in the welfare of marine life, both here on Central Wharf and around the world. It is this concern that drew two Aquarium employees, from two different departments, to the same patch of coastline oceans away in South Africa.

This fall Paul Leonard, a senior aquarist in the Penguin department, and Jo Blasi, a senior educator on the Visitor Experience team, volunteered hours of their time to hand raise baby African penguins near the chicks' native habitat. They helped out with the Chick Bolstering Project at the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds, better known as SANCCOB. The Chick Bolstering Project is a collaborative effort among several organizations that rescue, hand-rear and release chicks that have been orphaned or abandoned by their parents.

SANCCOB's efforts may be paying off. Studies by the organization find that, once released, many of these chicks grow up to have chicks of their own. So the hope is that by saving these chicks, which would die if left to fend for themselves in the wild, the Chick Bolstering Project could have a measurable effect on the declining population.

Recently listed as an endangered species, African penguins face some formidable threats, including depletion of their food from overfishing and climate change and pollution from incidents such as oil spills. Introduced predators, including cats and mongoose, also threaten nesting African penguins, which lay their eggs in burrows on the ground. Paul, who has helped raise African penguin chicks behind the scenes at the Aquarium, brings unique expertise to the chick rearing efforts at SANCCOB. "I have helped raise a couple of generations of African penguin chicks at the Aquarium as part of the Species



Paul Leonard and Jo Blasi spent many hours caring for African penguins at SANCCOB.

Survival Plan [SSP]," he explains. The SSP carefully coordinates breeding pairs among North American zoos and aquariums to ensure a healthy gene pool for this captive population.

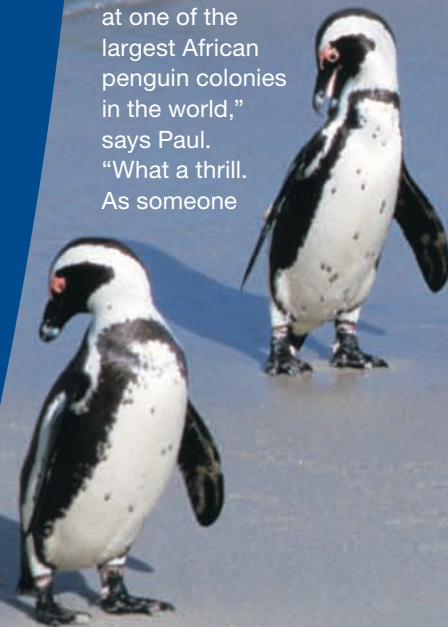
While Paul is on the front lines of the Penguin exhibit on Central Wharf, feeding and caring for the penguins and keeping their exhibit clean, Jo is visitors' connection to this vibrant exhibit. She is the liaison between the Penguin and Visitor Education departments, and is one of the educators who answers visitors' questions about our penguins while standing chest deep in the chilly water. In South Africa, Jo is looking to gain some hands-on experience with wild penguins, which she will be able to describe to visitors.

In her usual enthusiastic manner, Jo explains, "It's important for people to know about the threats facing the wild populations of African penguins because there are ways

people can help, even if they're miles away in Boston." For example, it is thought that global climate change is affecting the availability of food for African penguins. So by taking steps that might mitigate climate change, by taking public transportation instead of driving for example, individuals are doing their small part to help wild penguins.

Back in the field, Jo and Paul parted ways about halfway through their trip. Jo visited aquariums in South Africa to meet with their educators, share and compare techniques and see how they present issues like overfishing and climate change to their visitors. Paul continued on to Dassen Island.

"I assisted researchers with penguin population surveys at one of the largest African penguin colonies in the world," says Paul. "What a thrill. As someone



who deeply cares about this unique species of bird, it's been really exciting to be able to help these animals, both at the Aquarium and in the wild here in South Africa." He adds, "I really can't thank the Cunningham committee enough for this amazing opportunity."

Jo and Paul are in South Africa thanks to the John H. Cunningham Award, given by the Aquarium to Aquarium staffers. Interested employees who have been with the institution more than five years must complete a rigorous application process in order to be considered. The competitive award program was established in 1979 in honor of a former employee known for his enthusiasm and commitment to the Aquarium. Past winners of this honor have studied fur seals in Alaska and rockhopper penguins in South America, and swam with whale sharks in Belize.



These African penguin chicks will be hand-raised and then released into the wild.



This abandoned penguin chick just arrived at SANCCOB for care.

While the award allowed Aquarium employees to expand their expertise, these expeditions provided teaching tools for folks back home. This most recent trip to South Africa was no different. Jo and Paul brought the charm and hope of the African penguin chicks home to our desks and living rooms through the Global Explorers and Penguin blogs.

"As an educator, being able to share the things I've learned about African penguins with the public is huge," says Jo. "The blogs were a great way for me to show how other aquariums teach about the plight of these endangered birds."

"Now that I'm back, I've been able to share a lot with my colleagues in Boston, too," adds Paul. "Some of the techniques used at SANCCOB will help us improve our own chick rearing as part of the SSP."

Jo and Paul's world travels are helping their Aquarium colleagues as well as folks at home better understand these amazing little birds. From the front lines rescuing abandoned African penguin chicks thousands of miles away, gaining fresh perspective on their wild populations and new understanding on how educators in Africa teach about penguins in the wild, they have gone the distance to protect African penguins. Welcome back!

Read Paul and Jo's posts from the field.
www.neaq.org/blogs



Paul wore proper gear for handling nipping penguins at SANCCOB: oilers, neoprene forearm guards and a protective glove.



Fish, Fun and Fright

We had a great turnout for our annual members-only Halloween party on October 28, 2011. Nearly 1,000 members in attendance casually cavorted with creepy creatures from the deep, dizzily danced with DJ Sam Lurie from the Beantown Sound, playfully participated in a whole host of Halloween high jinks and heartily had an all 'round great time from the time the doors opened straight through when we capped off the night with our crazy costume contest. From costumed divers in the Giant Ocean Tank and trick or treat stations to a Sunken Treasure game and a Pumpkin Pursuit, the building was bursting with family-friendly fun and activities. Thanks to everyone who joined us for a fabulously fun night and to those who shared their photos of the night with us on Facebook!



Say cheese and save!

Until March 31, we have a very special offer for our members! Enjoy 50 percent off photo package prices from SharpShooter in the Aquarium lobby.

Member

VISITING TIPS

Winter has settled over New England, and we're all spending more time indoors. With February school vacation right around the corner, there's no better way to come in from the cold than to visit the Aquarium's Giant Ocean Tank, with its Caribbean coral reef and tropical fishes. We figured this would be a good time to share a few tips with you, our members, to help make your next visit fun from start to finish.

Be sure to bring your valid membership card and a picture ID when you visit to bypass the lines!

Come straight into the lobby and check in at the Membership Desk. You'll be inside gazing at our cozy coral reef in no time.

Need to renew your membership? Do it online!

Visit www.neaq.org/membership any time to renew your membership, then just bring your confirmation email with you when you visit.

Admission benefits are immediately accessible with an online renewal but there is a delay in access to some member benefits with online purchases. For details, go to www.neaq.org/membership and click on Membership FAQs.

Whitemargin stargazer (*Uranoscopus sulphureus*) camouflaging itself in the sand.

Beat the crowds: Arrive early or later in the day.

Most visitors arrive in the middle of the day. Avoid peak times by arriving before 10:30 a.m. or after 3:00 p.m. Don't forget to check online for our hours of operation before visiting.

Plan ahead and purchase your tickets in advance.

Our special venues—like the Simons IMAX Theatre—can sell out quickly during vacation week. Order your tickets in advance to ensure you get to do everything you

want to do. Remember to use your member e-passes when buying by phone or in person. And don't forget that as a member you can purchase discounted admissions for additional guests at the Membership Desk when you check in.

Take public transportation.

The Aquarium is right on the MBTA's Blue Line, so taking the T is easy. If you do plan to drive in, check online at www.neaq.org for area parking options. We do validate tickets from several local garages.

Dive In!

Join us for a member-exclusive evening on February 22 from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Members, avoid the daytime vacation week crowds by joining us after hours, when we open our doors just for you. Bring your family and friends and explore your favorite exhibits and galleries at your leisure.

Reservations are required.

Space is limited and these events always fill up quickly, so mark your calendar to register online at www.neaq.org/divein on Wednesday, February 8, 2012, beginning at noon.

Questions? Call 617-973-6564.

NAVIGATOR Society Families and Friends Evening

On November 19, the Aquarium opened exclusively for Navigator Society members and their invited guests. Navigators and guests were able to get up close and personal with sharks and rays at The Trust Family Foundation Shark and Ray Touch Tank, get their face painted with an aquatic theme, learn about the Giant Ocean Tank, the heart of the Aquarium, meet our newest residents, playful California sea lions Zoe and Sierra and much more.



Photo: D. Delucia

New Overseer Mike Fish and wife Elizabeth (center) introduce friends to the Aquarium.



Photos: D. Delucia

Longtime donor Elsie Van Buren touches a ray.



Isabell takes advantage of face painting.



Photo: K. Ellenbogen