

# **2021 Annual Report**

Protecting the blue planet



# 2021 Annual Report



#### Letter from the President and Chair

Dear Friends,

We are delighted to share the New England Aquarium's 2021 Annual Report.

The ocean is being deeply impacted by climate change and human use. At the New England Aquarium, we are working to ensure a vital and vibrant ocean for future generations. In 2021, with your help, we advanced this vision through public education, research, rescue, and civic leadership work.



Climate change and how it's affecting the ocean is

evident in everything we do. We share what we're seeing in our research and rescue work to encourage the responsible use of the ocean. We publish our findings in the academic and practice communities, lend scientific credibility to the drafting of state and federal legislation—including the designation of marine protected areas—and advise industry, from startups to established companies. We also share what we know with the public and Aquarium guests. All of these efforts are a powerful combination for protecting the ocean that sustains us all.

The warming ocean and rising sea levels are also impacting our home on Central Wharf, Boston's downtown waterfront, and coastal cities everywhere. Through our civic leadership work, we are focusing on making our waterfront climate resilient, inclusive, and accessible—for the good of our institution and our community.

Our work to protect the blue planet is needed now more than ever. With your help, we will continue to advance our mission and safeguard the ocean for future generations. Thank you for your trust and support!

Best,

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Vikki N. Spruill President & CEO

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Thomas R. Burton III Chair of the Board of Trustees

# 2021 Year in Review



From developing new techniques to treat and monitor animals in our care and in the wild to pioneering research that impacts ocean industry and national policy, the New England Aquarium worked to protect the blue planet in 2021 thanks to your support.

# **Engaging Through Education and Advocacy**

# Safely Reopening (Again)

The Aquarium reopened its doors to visitors in February after closing for seven weeks to comply with City of Boston guidance to contain the spread of Covid-19. In June, we expanded our hours for the summer season and opened a new dining option, Central Snack Bar, on the plaza. We also introduced new film offerings in Simons Theatre.

## **Educating Virtual Audiences**

<u>The Aquarium's Lecture Series</u>, hosted in the spring and fall with major support from the Lowell Institute, presented a range of speakers, including *National Geographic* photographer and New

England Aquarium Explorer-in-Residence Brian Skerry; astronaut and explorer Kathy Sullivan; and Academy-Award winning filmmaker and naturalist Craig Foster. These virtual events, attended by more than 3,200 participants – focused on marine life, ocean exploration, conservation, and environmental justice.

# Welcoming Sea Walls Boston

In July, the Aquarium served as the Honorary Conservation Partner for PangeaSeed Foundation's global event, Sea Walls: Artists for Oceans Program. Known locally as Sea Walls Boston, this weeklong mural festival raises awareness of marine conservation and coastal resiliency through ocean-themed public art and events. Sea Walls Boston commissioned 14 new ocean-advocacy murals, including a mural of a North Atlantic right whale painted on the side of the Aquarium's Simons Theatre by acclaimed artist Shepard Fairey. NEAq also hosted a film screening of Fairey's Obey Giant and a panel discussion titled "Countdown to 2030: Leveraging Art and Creativity for the Ocean Decade" in the Simons Theatre. And a team of scientists from the Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life at the New England Aquarium (ACCOL) updated participating artists on the environmental issues facing the Gulf of Maine region. Aquarium Board of Trustees member Linda Cabot facilitated the Aquarium's role as an honorary conservation partner, while the mural on the Simons Theatre was made possible with the generous support of Linda Cabot and Ed Anderson.



Central Snack Bar and the Simons Theatre.



Shepard Fairey's Mural on the Simons Theatre.

#### **Celebrating World Ocean Day**

In honor of World Ocean Day and in keeping with our commitment of a waterfront accessible to all, we presented a special educational activity on the Harborwalk about invasive species found in Boston Harbor. Led by the Aquarium's ClimaTeens, *live blue*<sup>™</sup> Ambassadors, and education staff, this two-hour event was free and open to the public.

#### **A Conservation Win**

Aquarium scientists, including our aerial survey team, <u>have</u> <u>documented</u> the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument's biodiversity for many years. This national treasure, which lies 130 miles east-southeast of Cape Cod, is 4,913 square miles and roughly the size of Connecticut. The monument was designated a national park by President Obama in 2016. It is teeming with ocean life, from corals and invertebrates to fish, marine mammals, sea birds, sharks, and sea turtles.

In 2020, the Trump administration reopened the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument to commercial fishing. To better understand the consequences of such activity, ACCOL Senior Scientist and Chair of the Spatial



A whale shark swims through the Marine National Monument.

Ecology, Mapping, and Assessment Program Dr. Jessica Redfern <u>conducted a study</u>, <u>published in July</u>, that determined commercial fishing in the monument would reduce species protection in this diverse deep-sea habitat. This fall, the Biden administration reinstated full protections to the monument. The Aquarium's President and CEO Vikki Spruill <u>noted the Aquarium's role</u> in providing the strong scientific evidence that led to the monument's designation in 2016 and attended the reinstatement ceremony at the White House.

# Leading Through Animal Care, Rescue, and Rehabilitation

## **Sustainable Breeding in Action**

The Aquarium's Larval Program, in partnership with Roger Williams University, fosters conservation by sustainably breeding select, in-house species—such as glassy sweepers—to avoid removing them from their native habitats. This fall, the Aquarium and Roger Williams University became the first to successfully rear glassy sweepers from egg to adult as a result of their long-standing partnership spearheaded by Dr. Andy Rhyne, professor of marine biology at Roger Williams University and an Aquarium research scientist, and Barbara Bailey, NEAq's curator of Husbandry and Sustainability. The two organizations designed and installed a dedicated breeding system at the Aquarium's Animal Care Center, where aquarists provide the perfect care and conditions for breeding these fickle fish.

## **Rescue and Rehabilitation at Our Sea Turtle Hospital**

The Aquarium's Sea Turtle Hospital in Quincy, Mass., <u>treated 569 rescued sea turtles</u> recovered from beaches along Cape Cod Bay during the 2020–21 stranding season. In addition to administering to critically endangered Kemp's ridley turtles, our Sea Turtle Hospital treated loggerhead and green turtles suffering from life-threatening medical conditions, including pneumonia and dehydration. The hospital operated amid strict social distancing guidelines, instituting new population management strategies and temperature-controlled conditions to more

efficiently stabilize turtles before transporting them to secondary facilities where they could be released back into warmer waters. The Aquarium also directly coordinated five separate turtle releases along Cape Cod beaches throughout the summer.

#### Helping to Combat Illegal Wildlife Trade

The Aquarium assisted with <u>the care and relocation of nearly</u> <u>100 eastern box turtles</u> detected at a U.S. port while en route to Asia this fall. As members of the Saving Animals From Extinction (SAFE) American Turtles Program, the Aquarium shared the care for this large group with colleagues at Zoo New England and the Roger Williams Park Zoo. When a ranavirus outbreak among the turtles meant that they could not be returned to the wild, the Aquarium worked to find them a home.

# **Solving Through Research and Innovation**

#### **Pioneering Acoustic Tags for Sea Turtles**

This spring, several members from our Animal Health, Rescue and Rehabilitation, and ACCOL teams made history by <u>surgically</u> <u>implanting acoustic tags</u> in three rehabilitated loggerhead sea turtles. The tags can be tracked by underwater receivers up and down the East Coast of the U.S. This novel procedure will enable our scientists to monitor rehabilitated sea turtles and record their migratory patterns and preferred feeding grounds for up to a decade.

#### **Studying North Atlantic Right Whales**

A <u>groundbreaking study</u> published in June and coauthored by Senior Scientist Amy Knowlton at the Aquarium's Anderson Cabot

Center for Ocean Life determined that North Atlantic right whales born in recent years are three feet shorter, on average, than whales born in the 1980s. The study's authors found human-induced stressors to be the cause, including fishing gear entanglements, injuries from ship strikes, and shifting feeding grounds as a result of climate change.

Scientists from ACCOL's Kraus Marine Mammal Conservation Program returned to Canada's Gulf of St. Lawrence this summer to conduct fieldwork after COVID-19 travel restrictions kept them from visiting in 2020. And ACCOL Research Scientist Dan Pendleton <u>released two studies</u> on how climate change in the Gulf of Maine, which is experiencing the most rapid increase in water temperature in the world, is affecting ocean animals, including North Atlantic right whales.

#### **Updating North Atlantic Right Whale Population Numbers**

In October, the Aquarium announced, on behalf of the North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium, that <u>the latest</u> <u>population estimate is 336</u>. This marks an eight percent decline in the right whale population since 2019, when it was estimated at 366.



Eastern box turtles at the Sea Turtle Hospital in Quincy.



An x-ray shows the placement of the acoustic tag on the lower left side of the turtle.

## **Monitoring Shark Resiliency**

ACCOL Senior Scientist Nick Whitney led <u>a major study</u> on the resilience of some shark species in relation to the stress induced from being caught and released by commercial longline fisheries. Some 300 sharks were tagged over a five-year period in order to measure their blood stress values and determine their survivability when returned to the wild. The study found while some shark species can tolerate catch and release, others, like blacktip sharks, cannot, as demonstrated by a total mortality rate of 62 percent. This research will help inform practices used by commercial fishers in relation to bycatch.



Nick Whitney preparing to bring a shark onboard for tagging.

## **Examining Shark Pups and Rising Water Temperatures**

ACCOL scientists and members of the Animal Care team partnered on <u>a study</u> that examined the negative impacts of rising water temperatures on epaulette sharks. Results indicate rising ocean temperatures caused the epaulette shark pups to be born smaller and in a weakened state.

## Fostering Bluetech with BlueSwell

The BlueSwell Incubator Program won an <u>Honorable Mention</u> in Fast Company's World Changing Ideas Awards 2021. Our BlueSwell program (a partnership with SeaAhead, Inc.) supports the creation and growth of start-up companies with scalable solutions that enhance ocean health, sustainable ocean industry, and global resilience. In September, BlueSwell accepted its <u>second cohort</u> of bluetech start-ups.

# **Building Communities Through Civic Leadership**

## Working toward a Downtown Waterfront for All

As an organization located on a wharf along Boston Harbor, NEAq recognizes its duty, and that of all downtown waterfront organizations, to prepare for climate resilience while also ensuring the Aquarium and the entire downtown waterfront remain welcoming, inclusive, and accessible spaces for all visitors and community members. This summer, the Aquarium was among 40 nonprofit organizations that joined the <u>Coalition for a Resilient</u> and Inclusive Waterfront to educate Boston's mayoral candidates and voters on issues impacting Boston's waterfront in advance of the 2021 municipal elections, with a specific focus on resilience, inclusivity, access, and the economic vitality of Boston's harbor, islands, and rivers.



Boston's downtown waterfront.

# Hosting the Boston Mayoral Forum

In July, the Aquarium hosted a mayoral forum in the Simons Theatre focused on critical waterfront issues. Four of the five mayoral candidates participated, including Councilor-At-Large Annissa Essaibi George, Councilor-At-Large (now Mayor) Michelle Wu, Councilor Andrea Campbell, and former City of Boston Chief of Economic Development John Barros.

#### **Conversations on Climate Action**

U.S. Senator Edward J. Markey hosted a conversation about climate activism at the Aquarium in August. In a town hall-style presentation on the Aquarium's Harbor View Terrace, Senator Markey discussed the Civilian Climate Corps, a Biden administration national service initiative for conservation projects; the Green New Deal, which aims to address climate change, job creation, and economic inequality through public policy; and other measures the U.S. Senate must take to ensure that legislative action meets the scope and scale of the climate crisis.

## **Engaging Local Leadership**

The Aquarium held its first annual legislative breakfast for more than 70 members and staff of the Massachusetts State Senate and House of Representatives in September. Aquarium President and CEO Vikki Spruill and House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Aaron Michlewitz co-hosted the breakfast in the Harbor View Terrace tent, which featured presentations on the Aquarium's work to advance ocean conservation and waterfront resiliency.



Representative Aaron Michlewitz at the legislative breakfast.

# 2021 Financials



#### **New England Aquarium Corporation**

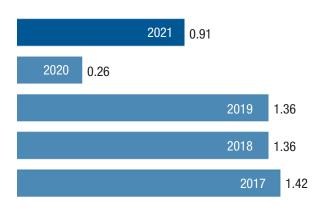
Financial Results (in thousands of dollars)

Operating Revenue & Support	FY 2021	FY 2020	CHANGE \$
Admissions – Individuals & Groups	\$19,295.8	\$6,670.4	\$12,625.4
Retail Sales – Food, Gift Shop & Events	2,761.1	1,142.2	1,618.9
Memberships – Individual & Family	1,504.4	2,325.0	(820.6)
Corporate – Memberships & Sponsorships	878.2	776.3	101.9
Gifts & Pledges	13,004.8	9,967.7	3,037.1
Grants & Contracts	2,802.2	1,978.2	824.0
Net assets released from restriction	7,379.3	4,203.9	3,175.4
Other	2,968.2	287.6	2,680.6
Total Operating Revenue & Support	50,594.0	27,351.3	23,242.7
Operating Expenses			
Research, Conservation & Education	6,316.9	6,211.9	105.0
Exhibit Operation & Maintenance	7,881.3	8,501.7	(620.4)
Plant Operations	7,022.1	7,967.9	(945.8)
General Administration & Supporting Services	5,590.9	6,308.0	(717.1)
Fundraising	2,604.5	3,343.7	(739.2)
Interest	606.7	220.5	386.2
Total Operating Expenses	30,022.4	32,553.7	(2,531.3)
Operating Reserve (Deficit)*	\$20,571.6	\$(5,202.4)	\$25,774.0
Other Changes in Unrestricted Net Assets			
Operating Reserve (deficit)	20,571.6	(5,202.4)	25,774.0
Non-operating Revenues and Expense, Net	3,857.5	508.8	3,348.7
Net Assets Released to Fund Capital Improvements	356.5	499.2	(142.7)
Realized & Unrealized Gains (Losses), Net	1,900.6	(268.4)	2,169.0
Gain on Disposal of Fixed Assets & Debt Refinancing	0.0	(32.3)	32.3
Depreciation & Amortization Expense	(4,322.8)	(4,653.5)	330.7
Net Non-cash Pension Related Changes	(662.6)	(634.8)	(27.8)
Increase (Decrease) in Unrestricted Net Assets		(9,783.4)	
Increase (Decrease) in Restricted Net Assets	91.2	· · ·	1,045.3
Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	21,792.0	(10,737.5)	
Net Assets – Beginning of Year	44,680.1	55,417.6	(10,737.5)
Net Assets – End of Year	\$66,472.1	\$44,680.1	\$21,792.0

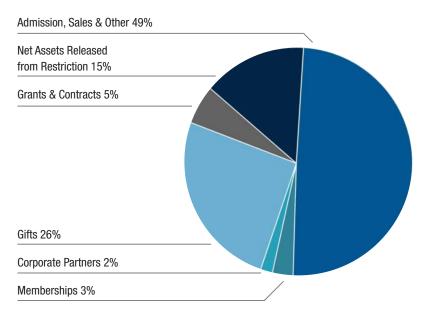
\*Operating reserve, as defined by management, excludes capital expenditures, principal payments, depreciation and amortization charges, and non-recurring transactions. Audited financial statements, with an unqualified opinion by Mayer Hoffman McCann P.C., are available on request.

# **Total Aquarium Attendance**

(millions)

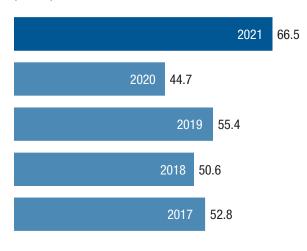


## **Operating Revenue**

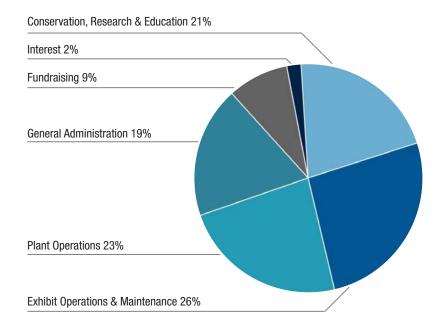


#### **Total Net Assets**

(millions)



# **Operating Expenses**



# 2021 Leadership



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# New to the Board of Trustees

#### Dr. Robert "Bob" Chen

is a professor and interim dean of the School for the Environment at the University of Massachusetts Boston (UMass Boston). His research interests include carbon cycling in coastal waters, contaminants in urban



harbors, and the application of coastal sensor networks to societal needs. He is also dedicated to ocean and environmental science education and outreach at the local, national, and international levels. He currently serves on the Steering Committee of the Stone Living Lab, a partnership between the City of Boston, UMass Boston, Boston Harbor Now, and other leading organizations, to engage scientists and the community in research, education, and the promotion of equity. Dr. Chen holds an undergraduate degree in chemistry and physics from Harvard University and a Ph.D. in chemical oceanography from the University of California, San Diego (Scripps Institution of Oceanography).

#### Samuel Slater was

elected to the Board of Ambassadors in 2017. He is a managing partner of Tremont Asset Management LLC, the real estate investment arm of Slater Family Holdings. Mr. Slater works in the film industry as producer and



co-founder of Burn Later Productions. He is a partner and serves on the board of the new Seattle Kraken NHL expansion team and the Climate Pledge Arena. Mr. Slater is a director of the Slater Family Foundation, overseer at the Boston Children's Museum, and in 2021 was nominated by President Biden to serve on the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority. He holds a degree in history from George Washington University and an MPA from Suffolk University.

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This list reflects our Governance members as of June 1, 2022.

#### **In Memoriam**

We would like to honor the memory of the following Aquarium board members, volunteers, and donors who passed away in 2021 and 2022.

Tammy Au Gerald W. Blakeley Jr. John W. Humphrey Richard G. Jacobus Edward C. Johnson

#### **Sponsored Ocean Research and Conservation Activities**

Primarily through the work of the Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life, our researchers and technical staff conduct independent scientific research and advise corporations and industry groups towards practical solutions that mitigate negative human impacts on our ocean. We promote these science-based solutions in New England and beyond, building on the Aquarium's legacy of protecting our blue planet and advocating for a vibrant and vital ocean. Thank you to these sponsors and partners who further these efforts.

- Arctus Conservation Law Foundation The Builder's Initiative Economic Development Administration Equinor Fisheries and Oceans Canada Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Gorton's International Flavors and Fragrances Irving Oil
- Island Foundation Arthur L. and Elaine V. Johnson Foundation Marine Mammal Commission Mass Cultural Council Massachusetts Clean Energy Center Massachusetts Environmental Trust Massachusetts Technology Collaborative Mayflower Wind Energy LLC Morris Animal Foundation New England Biolabs Foundation Northeast Regional Association of Coastal Ocean Observing Systems
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Natural Resources Defense Council Oceankind Office of Naval Research Ørsted Saint Mary's University Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program (SERDP) United States Geological Survey (USGS) Volgenau Foundation Vineyard Wind

# 2021 Donors



The New England Aquarium gratefully acknowledges the individuals, foundations, and corporations whose generous financial contributions and pledges provided critical support to provide care for thousands of animals, power conservation research, and educate audiences of all ages. This list recognizes gifts of over \$500.

We are pleased to recognize and express our gratitude to more than 14,000 active member households. We depend on our members' support to continue our critical work. Additionally, a special thank you to our Charter Members, who have been with us since the Aquarium opened its doors on June 20, 1969. Thank you for your support!

#### **Great Benefactors**

The following donors have committed \$1 million or more cumulatively since the New England Aquarium's opening in 1969.

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6 6 Our decades-long support of the New England Aquarium originated from the delight our various nieces and nephews enjoyed while visiting the Aquarium with us. We see our contributions to the Aquarium as serving a dual purpose: The first is to provide resources to organizations that protect endangered sea life and promote the health of our oceans. The second is to instill in our nieces and nephews the honor of service, the need to care for our environment, and the value of kindness. Knowing that our donations to the Aquarium help in its vital work to protect and maintain our fragile blue planet gives us great satisfaction. ??

-Anne and Peter Costa

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6 The late John Prescott, a marine biologist and former director of the New England Aquarium, was deeply committed to conserving the North Atlantic right whale. To help save the critically endangered species, Mr. Prescott started a right whale institute in Nova Scotia. His wife Sandy chose to continue his work.

To memorialize John Prescott and his passions for ocean conservation, science, and the North Atlantic right whale specifically, Sandy Prescott gifted the New England Aquarium funds to establish the John H. Prescott Memorial Fund. This fund will support the North Atlantic right whale research and conservation work conducted by the Kraus Marine Mammal Conservation Program in the Aquarium's Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life. **?** 

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