



New England
Aquarium

blue

It's time to *live blue*™



Blueway: Connecting the Public to the Waterfront

Microgrants Get Massive Results

*In the Field on Longest-Lasting
Shark Behavior Study*

Members' Magazine
Volume 52, Number 3 Fall 2019

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@neaq.org
Dive into a sea of resources online at neaq.org. Our website is full of conservation information, animal facts, and details that will help you plan your next trip to the Aquarium.

On the cover: A group of nurse sharks (*ginglymostoma cirratum*)
Photo: © Franco Banfi / BluePlanetArchive.com

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Editor: Jon Kinson
Designer: Cathy LeBlanc
Contributors: Emily Greenhalgh, Vanessa Kahn, Jon Kinson, and Amy MacKinnon

General Information: 617-973-5200
Marine Animal Stranding Hotline: 617-973-5247
Membership: 617-973-6555, members@neaq.org
Navigator and Conservation Societies:
617-226-2622, giving@neaq.org
The Tide: 617-973-5224, thetide@neaq.org



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As a member of the New England Aquarium, you are part of a community devoted to protecting the blue planet. We know you care as much as we do about the ocean and we can't thank you enough for supporting our efforts.



Photo: Webb Chappell

From the President and CEO

The Aquarium is a place where people gather to learn and experience firsthand what connects them to the ocean. Our building creates an immersive experience with exhibits intended to educate and inspire. Nowhere is that more true than with the Giant Ocean Tank and our newly opened Indo-Pacific Coral Reef Exhibit, which features the colors of the sea in all their glory.

Our commitment to our mission also extends beyond our four walls through the conservation science and research work of the Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life, as well as our leadership in policy and advocacy. As a beloved and iconic Boston institution, we see ourselves as a civic anchor in our community. We want your visit to the Aquarium to be the beginning of a lifelong conservation journey because we know that a healthy ocean means a healthy planet for all of its inhabitants! We also have an obligation to share our knowledge about and our solutions to the many challenges facing the ocean and ultimately ourselves.

We are living in a world and city wrestling with the effects of climate change and warming, surging, and rising seas. We want to be at the forefront of educating our visitors about the impacts of climate change and what we can be doing to not only mitigate those impacts, but make our city more resilient and adaptive to change. We currently do this through our programming and exhibits, but we must also do so through our own building and campus. As the first modern building on Central Wharf, we are compelled to reimagine and renovate not only our own facility, but to create a vision for a better future with our members, visitors, community, and the world.

That vision is the Blueway.

The Blueway will more deeply connect Boston's most important resources: its people and its waterfront. Working with the city and other stakeholders, Central Wharf will be the centerpiece for climate resiliency in New England and an opportunity for all of Boston and the world to experience our waterfront. I encourage you to read more about our vision for the future of the Aquarium on page 4.

Bold challenges require a bold vision and solutions. We stand ready with you to imagine an inclusive and accessible Central Wharf and New England Aquarium—our Blueway—for all of us from which to learn and to be inspired.

For the fishes,

Vikki N. Spruill

Vikki N. Spruill

At the Aquarium

Quartet of Penguin Chicks Part of Species Survival Plan

146 penguins.

Each began as an adorable, squawking chick destined not to fly but to soar gracefully through the water.

But more importantly, every one of the 146 penguins that have hatched and been raised at the New England Aquarium in the past decades has played a role in a bigger effort.

Our penguins are part of Species Survival Plans, which are coordinated among zoos and aquariums to ensure genetic diversity and build DNA reservoirs should wild penguin populations drop to dangerously low levels. As most penguin species in the wild are either threatened or endangered, the plans help ensure that a diverse stock of healthy penguins is maintained.

This summer, when the Aquarium trooped out a southern rockhopper and a trio of African penguins to be weighed and measured, it was a prime opportunity to view these balls of fluff and it gave the Aquarium's biologists the chance to showcase the chicks.

The Aquarium's dedication to protecting penguins begins here on Central Wharf, but extends across the world. The genealogy of every penguin in our Association of Zoos and Aquariums Species Survival Plans is known. With input from the plan's members, decisions are made on which penguins would make the best pairings. Sometimes, the two penguins are already at the same institution, but penguins periodically need to be moved to other facilities.



Aquarium Penguin Biologist Eric Fox holds one of the African penguin chicks during a summer weigh-in.



This African penguin is part of a coordinated Species Survival Plan. Photos: Vanessa Kahn.

—Emily Greenhalgh

Elizabeth Stephenson

*Program Officer and Chair
of the Marine Conservation Action Fund*

How do you make a big impact with only small grants? That's the specialty of the Aquarium's Marine Conservation Action Fund (MCAF) Program. With just over \$1 million, MCAF has supported more than 150 ocean conservation projects in 50-plus countries across six of the Earth's seven continents.

"We are joining hands with people all over the world to take on the problems facing the ocean," said Elizabeth Stephenson, Program Officer and Chair of MCAF.

MCAF addresses critical needs in the marine conservation field by awarding microgrants of up to \$10,000. Since it launched in 1999, MCAF has supported a wide range of projects, from combating sea turtle poaching in Costa Rica to marine animal issues in Iran.

These grantees are on the front lines, often in locations where there is minimal support in place for conservation of any kind.

"It's so important to see conservation efforts happen in the developing world," said Elizabeth, adding that every grantee is an inspiration.

"In this day and age, when there's so much despair in conservation in the world, to be connected to a network of people who are making change happen on the ground and persisting is just so inspiring," she said.

Building those connections has been Elizabeth's focus since taking over the MCAF program in 2008. In 2015, she spearheaded the launch of the Fellows program, through which MCAF brings

select grantees to Boston to strengthen their connections with the Aquarium's Anderson Cabot Center researchers, raise awareness and learn how to effectively communicate about their work, and, of course, share their stories with some of the Aquarium's more than 1 million annual visitors.

"MCAF was designed as a funding ambulance for the ocean," said Elizabeth. "But it has really grown to be about investing in conservation leaders."

That's what MCAF is all about—not just investing in projects, but investing in people.

Elizabeth calls the MCAF grantees "renaissance people" because they speak all the languages needed for

successful conservation. Outreach. Science. Diplomacy. Education. They're fluent in all of them. "They're able to do all these and do them well," she said.

"It's a real two-way learning process," said Elizabeth. "We're investing in leaders and projects, but we're getting so much back. We're learning so much about the science they're doing, how they're working with local stakeholders and communities, and involving youth in their programs."

From the Aquarium's perspective, that's one of MCAF's greatest strengths—being able to incorporate that on-the-ground knowledge into how we operate every day. It's a truly multi-disciplinary, inclusive approach to conservation.

"They're doing science, involving fishermen, schools, politicians," said Elizabeth. "It's a very holistic approach that I think you need to have long-lasting success in conservation."

For Elizabeth, that's one of the highlights of her job. With such varying projects and personalities, every day is different. Our Fellows have a variety of backgrounds, with experience in research, marketing, rocket science, and even musical theater.

"Every new project and new person introduces a whole different world and is an education in and of itself," she said. "It's exciting all the time because there's always something new to learn."

So what's next for MCAF? Elizabeth wants to deepen the support system for the MCAF Fellows and grantees, both financially and through the support of the ever-growing MCAF network. And since diversity is a huge priority for the program, she's aiming to broaden the network of conservation leaders to support more emerging leaders who are working in their native developing countries.

As MCAF Fellow Asha de Vos, Ph.D., said, "There needs to be a local hero on every coastline."

At the New England Aquarium, we are proud to be able to support these heroes.

Purple dots represent projects funded by MCAF. Numbered dots denote multiple projects. See our interactive map at andersoncabotcenterforoceanlife.org. Map by Brooke Hodge/ACCOL/NEAq.

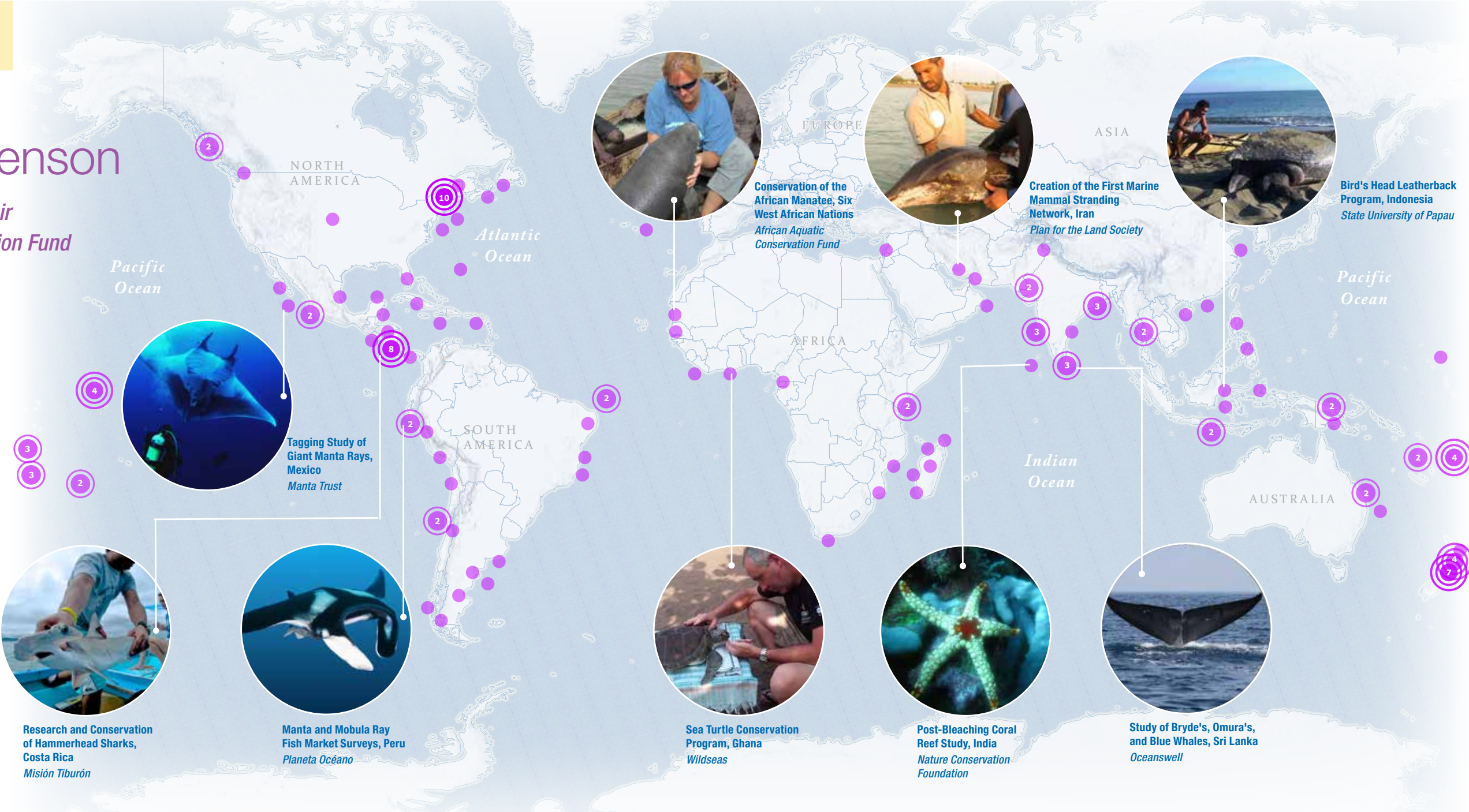
In October, the Aquarium will welcome our Fellows to Boston for the first-ever MCAF Fellows Summit.

Follow along on social media.

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 @newenglandaquarium



—Vikki Spruill

THE BLUEWAY

This year the New England Aquarium celebrates 50 years of ocean conservation, and we are so excited to continue our work well into the next 50 years. We were the first modern aquarium in the nation and are proud to have reached this magnificent milestone and celebrate it with our 1.4 million visitors this year—most especially you, our members.

Visiting the Aquarium is just the first step in that conservation journey that begins with education and inspiration, and, hopefully, ends with greater understanding and a resolve to take action to protect the ocean. Many familiar with this building may not know much about the depth and breadth of our conservation work, including cutting-edge scientific research around some of the biggest challenges facing the ocean. All our efforts are focused on protecting the blue planet.

It's a simple strategy: we engage, educate, and conserve in order to inspire others to do the same. That is our duty to the ocean.

As a global ocean conservation organization, we lead with science—and we go big.

The researchers and scientists at the Aquarium's Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life offer practical solutions to mitigate human impacts on the ocean.

But it's not enough for our scientists to study climate change and other human impacts in the Gulf of Maine and beyond. We need to give the public a sense of how climate change is impacting them. To do that, we need to meet people where they are and then connect them to the water.

That's why our vision for the Blueway is so critical. Central Wharf will be the centerpiece for climate resiliency in Boston both in the renovation and reimagining of our building and campus, and in the way it is constructed to better protect our waterfront from surging and warming seas.

The most important goal of The Blueway is to give all of Boston and our visitors

from around the world access to the waterfront. We want to use that access and our campus to tell a story about the impacts of climate change and what we can be doing to mitigate impacts and make ourselves more resilient to change.

We want to help the public understand the connection between themselves and the ocean. We often say that every other breath we take comes from the oceans. That becomes far more tangible to people when they stand alongside the water.

Simply put, the Aquarium has a responsibility to walk the talk on climate resiliency by transforming our property as sea levels rise. We've already seen the effects of flooding on Central Wharf. It becomes an island during severe weather events.

By transforming the Aquarium campus and setting an example for how to execute climate resiliency planning, we will help set the course for a climate-ready Boston. That is our obligation as a global conservation organization and civic anchor in our community.

And that's the priority for the New England Aquarium going forward. Using our conservation science and reputation as a trusted community leader and combining both—to influence social change for a healthier, sustainable ocean.

Bold challenges demand bold visions and solutions. Together, we are the protectors of the blue and stand ready to realize this vision with you and your continued support.



Climate Conversations

Tips to effectively discuss climate change

Climate change is on everyone's mind, but sometimes talking about what can be a complex topic can be tricky. That is why the New England Aquarium founded the National Network for Ocean and Climate Change Interpretation (NNOCCI) in 2010.

An effort led by the New England Aquarium in collaboration with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, NNOCCI equips science educators from 184 institutions across 38 states with powerful communication tools for solution-oriented conversations.

To learn more about climate change, because there's always more to learn, visit our NNOCCI exhibit on Central Wharf and talk to our educators about climate change communication, or visit neaq.org/nnocci.

In the meantime, here are some tips from NNOCCI Program Manager Hannah Pickard on how to have effective climate change conversations with family and friends:



Photo: Vanessa Kahn

Listen

The goal is not to win an argument or prove someone wrong. The goal is to have a conversation and learn about each other's thoughts and perspectives. Be open to what the other person is saying and consider that person's point of view.



Ask

Not everyone has the facts straight about climate change. Some people might repeat information from unreliable sources while others haven't thought about climate change at all. Some good questions to ask are "What makes you think that?" and "Why do you feel that way?" Once you understand someone's perspective, ask if you can share your beliefs on climate change.



Respond

Guide others toward a productive way of thinking and answer key questions. Why does it matter? What's going on? What we can do about it? Give them hope by sharing what gives you hope. Steer clear of doom and gloom. The realities of climate change can be overwhelming. When a person feels as if a problem is insurmountable, it makes them less likely to participate in solutions. Instead, focus on the benefits of proactive engagement on climate change.



Offer Solutions

Help people find a role for themselves. Empower others to take action that is meaningful. Instead of talking about individual actions, suggest big-picture solutions because that's where the attention is needed. Energy reduction,

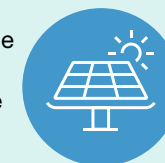


shifting toward renewable energy sources, and talking with other people are all ways we can help combat climate change.

Ask friends to join you in participating in conservation programs such as the Aquarium's *live blue*™ Ambassador and *live blue* Service Corps programs. Surround yourself with people who care about the issues you care about!

The most important part of having a conversation about climate change is to be OK with the outcome. Just remember that the fate of the world does not hang on your ability to have one conversation with one person, you are only one piece of the puzzle! The goal is conversation. If nobody is talking about climate change, then nothing will happen to mitigate it.

So what are you waiting for? You're now ready to be a climate change conversationalist!



—Emily Greenhalgh

A Day in the Field: Sun, Science, and Shark Mating

Clear skies and not a hint of a breeze. It's only 8 a.m. and the temperature is already well into the 90s as we paddle our kayaks through the coral reef under a cloudless sky. We're nearly 70 miles west of Key West, FL, in the remote Dry Tortugas National Park, and it looks like it's going to be a sweltering day of fieldwork.

If you ignore the seaplanes, it's easy to imagine yourself back in the mid-1800s. Fort Jefferson—the largest brick structure in the Northern Hemisphere and a key outpost during the Civil War—looms behind us. Like sentries of the past, we will spend the day staring out into the jewel blue water for any hint of movement. Instead of searching for Confederate ships on the horizon, we're on the lookout for fins, specifically the thrashing and rolling fins of mating sharks.

A few thousand feet from the fort, in shallow waters at the edge of the reef, a 12-foot aluminum ladder marks the home of the longest-running shark behavior study in the world. For decades, Wes Pratt and his wife, Theo, have been coming to the Dry Tortugas to study and tag the nurse sharks (*Ginglymostoma cirratum*) that have visited this reef for more than a century. Wes is a retired NOAA Fisheries shark scientist and current Adjunct Scientist at the Aquarium's Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life. Since 1998, Nick Whitney, Ph.D., an Anderson

Cabot Center Senior Scientist, has joined the Pratts in this vital fieldwork. They spend several weeks here each June.

What makes this research so important? For such popular animals, we know shockingly little about some behaviors of sharks. In fact, almost everything we know about shark courtship and mating behavior comes from this Dry Tortugas study. It's the only place that these behaviors can be observed on a predictable basis. It's also the only Marine Protected Area in the world that specifically protects a shark mating ground.

Nick waves us over. He and Wes are already at the site with research assistant Connor White, who is standing a few steps up on a ladder and staring intently through a pair of binoculars. All three are covered from head to toe against the harsh sun: straw hats, gloves, long sleeves, and long pants.

It's been a quiet morning, they tell us, as we stand up to our knees in seawater, gazing out. Brianne of Tarth, an unusually large female nurse shark that was tagged the day before, swims about 15 feet away, easily identifiable due to the bright orange float tag on her floppy dorsal fin.

Many people don't realize how much of scientific fieldwork is just waiting. We scan the sunny horizon for hours with little excitement, as only a few singular sharks swim near us.

But we're not looking for a single shark. What we need is the splashing and rolling that signifies a mating event. Finally in early afternoon, it happens! When nurse sharks mate, the male stalks its desired female, eventually clamping on to her pectoral fin and holding on tight while the pair thrash and roll around. While they're distracted, our scientists get the chance to strike.

"Mating event!" Connor yells from his ladder perch, pointing at a disturbance in the water about 1,000 feet away. Immediately, Wes and Nick sprint toward the sharks—

of the science team has made its way to the shark, pulling the scientific gear over in a kayak. There are no visible tags on the dorsal fins, but the tags could have fallen off. Our scientists also use the same type of tag a vet uses on a cat or dog, a small rice-sized tag called a Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT). Wes first scans the animal with the same type of scanner a veterinarian would use on a lost pet.

We're in luck. This is a new shark. A female.

That means it's time for data collection. Body measurements, blood samples, and tagging.



Nick keeps a tight hold on a nurse shark caught in his large net. Photo: Emily Greenhalgh

quite a feat in nearly waist-deep water. Clutched in their arms are the keys to catching a shark in the shallows—giant poles fitted with 10-foot nets.

And they've got one! They manage to fit one of the nets over the shark's head, spinning the long pole with practiced ease to trap the more than 8-foot animal. By now, the rest

The blood samples are new to this process. Anderson Cabot Center Associate Scientist Emily Jones collects blood for our Marine Stress and Ocean Health team to see if we can analyze hormone levels in the blood of sharks the same way we do in North Atlantic right whales.

Conveniently for shark scientists, most shark species,

when flipped upside-down, go into a catatonic-like state called "tonic immobility." It certainly makes sampling easier than dealing with a thrashing 8-foot shark. Still, the team is vigilant. This is a wild animal, and while a nurse shark won't try to eat a human, a bite would ruin our day.

When the female shark is flipped back over, it's time to tag her. She's getting the full treatment. Two small plastic discs—blue and purple—adorn her dorsal fin, an easy way to identify her when we see her again days (or years) down the line. Next up is a bigger orange data-logging float called an accelerometer. Just like a FitBit™ watch or the fitness app on your cellphone, these tags collect data every second for a few days before popping off for our science team to collect. The work is humane, and sharks are not hurt during this research.

Understanding when, where, and how sharks mate helps us understand what locations and times are most important for species survival.

When we release our newly tagged shark—Bean, she was named by a very special guest—we're exhausted and excited at the same time. Standing in the clear water watching her swim away, it's easy to forget the heat, the beating sun, and the sheer amount of time we stood just waiting around for that magical mating event to happen.

This is just one data point in a study that's lasted years. We're just visitors. But tomorrow—and the next day, and the day after that—our scientists will don their straw hats and do it all again.

Visit cbsnews.com and search "Dry Tortugas" to view a special report on the research.



Anderson Cabot Center scientist Emily Jones draws blood while Nick Whitney and Wes Pratt hold the shark in tonic immobility. Inset: Identification tags and data logger float on a nurse shark's dorsal fin. Photos: Emily Greenhalgh



The freshly tagged shark swims back in the shallows. Photo: Emily Greenhalgh

HOLIDAY gift giving

Whether you're going for fun, thoughtful, or enduring, the Aquarium offers a wide array of gift ideas that will make an impact on your loved ones—and the blue planet!



Gift membership

More than a present, membership offers an entire year of education, exploration, and awe. You can choose to have the membership materials sent directly to your recipient with a gift message or to yourself so you can present the gift.



Animal Encounters and Behind-the-Scenes Tours

Animal Encounters and Behind-the-Scenes Tours are experiences that are designed for those with a sense of adventure and an unquenchable curiosity. These immersive encounters take a visit to an entirely new level.

Make an online donation

For the person who has everything, make an online donation to the Aquarium in that person's name. The holiday season is the perfect time to donate in honor of family and friends and it supports our vital education, conservation, and research initiatives to protect the blue planet.

Gift items

Turn every great Aquarium gift option into a bundle of holiday joy by pairing it with a book, plush toy, piece of jewelry, or other eco-friendly item from our Gift Shop. Visit the shop to pick out that special gift or visit our online store. Members receive a 10% discount on in-store shop purchases.

Learn more about all these holiday gift ideas at neaq.org/gifts.

Cruising with The Tide –

The young professionals of *The Tide* and their guests savored a gorgeous summer evening—complete with a stunning sunset—while cruising around Boston Harbor and taking in exquisite views of our city's skyline aboard the *Liberty Clipper* on Thursday, August 15. Aquarium educators Nick Pioppi and Taylor Engelsman spoke about our climate resiliency work as attendees enjoyed drinks and light bites. A special thank you to those who, quite literally, helped us set off—hoisting the sail of the 125-foot traditional tall ship vessel. We were so happy to share this memorable night with our community of ocean advocates.

Visit our neaq.org/thetide to learn more about how you can join us for next year's sunset cruise—and all that is in store for *The Tide* in the coming months!



Facebook Live Presentations

Each month, the New England Aquarium presents Facebook Live events that give the public a better idea of what goes on behind the scenes here on Central Wharf.

On the first Friday of each month

We go live with Aquarium educators to meet a new animal or dive deep into an important issue facing our blue planet.

Mid-month, every month

New England Aquarium President and CEO Vikki Spruill speaks with members of our team, tapping into their areas of expertise to better understand current issues and learn how their work reinforces the Aquarium's efforts to protect the blue planet.

Stay informed! Don't miss these enlightening broadcasts.



November October December



LECTURE

11/7 Author Alex Dehgan

7 p.m. – 9 p.m.
Simons IMAX® Theatre

Author Alex Dehgan is the author of *The Snow Leopard Project: And Other Adventures in Warzone Conservation*. As head of the Wildlife Conservation Society Afghanistan Program, he helped create Afghanistan's first national park.
neaq.org/aquariumlectures



10/27 Halloween on the Harbor

NEW TIME!
11 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Show your spooky spirit while appreciating and learning how to protect the blue planet and its extraordinary marine species at this new Halloween event.

Registration opens for Premium members on October 2 and for Standard members on October 3 at neaq.org/memberevents.

LECTURE

11/14 Deep-Sea Corals and Their Climate Secrets

7 p.m. – 9 p.m.
Simons IMAX® Theatre

Professor Laura F. Robinson of the University of Bristol will explore how and why corals can survive in inhospitable locations and how the corals are being impacted by current human activities.

This is the ninth annual John H. Carlson Lecture presented by Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Lorenz Center and the New England Aquarium.
neaq.org/aquariumlectures



11/29 Member Appreciation Night

6:30 p.m. – 9 p.m.

Continue the celebration of the Aquarium's 50th anniversary year with a special evening just for you —our members! Take in your favorite exhibits and relax with us as the holiday season kicks off. Don't forget the Gift Shop is a great place to jumpstart your sustainable gift giving and use your member discount.

12/3 #GivingTuesday

Be part of this global day of giving by supporting the New England Aquarium. You, our members and friends, help power our mission of protecting the blue planet. Please make a tax-deductible contribution today and help ensure a bright future for the ocean. Thank you!

neaq.org/giving



12/8 Sensory Inclusive Morning

Begins at 8 a.m.

The Aquarium opens exclusively for people with special sensory processing needs and their families. This event allows for a quieter experience with all your favorite marine animals. Admission tickets are required and will be available to purchase online in advance.

neaq.org/visit/accessibility

Sign Up for SeaMail

With insider information, member alerts, and behind-the-scenes stories, SeaMail is the best way to stay informed throughout your membership year.

Sign up at neaq.org/SeaMail and never miss out!

12/15 Premium-Exclusive Holiday Breakfast

Begins at 8 a.m.

Enjoy a relaxing visit to the Aquarium and learn about all we do to help protect the blue planet. Stop by the Gift Shop to purchase holiday gifts and take advantage of your member discount.

Reservations for Premium members, which are required, open at noon on December 3 at neaq.org/memberevents.

12/31 Last Chance to Make Your 2019 Tax Year Donation

As a not-for-profit organization, the Aquarium depends on the generosity of people like you who share our commitment to the ocean. Please take a moment before midnight tonight to help protect the blue planet. Your donation helps support our Dry Tortugas shark research, MCAF program, Species Survival Plans, and many other projects. Thank you!

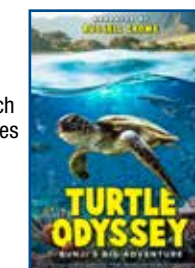
neaq.org/donate



Films

Turtle Odyssey 40 minutes

Follow the incredible journey of a spry young green sea turtle. Watch as this remarkable reptile traverses thousands of miles of open ocean—and then migrates with mysterious precision back to the very beach where it was born.



Hidden Pacific 40 minutes

Hidden Pacific visits some of the Pacific Ocean's most pristine islands and atolls, specks of land bursting with diversity. Explore jungles crawling with exotic animals before plunging beneath the ocean's surface to see the abundance of marine life in the coral reefs. Learn the storied history of the islands and discover their current role as environmental research centers.



Australia's Great Wild North 40 minutes

Journey to a wilderness teeming with ancient life, both ferocious and adorable, in an epic adventure to one of the Earth's most remote wetlands and the oldest rainforest on the planet in *Australia's Great Wild North*.



Oceans: Our Blue Planet 40 minutes

The glittering oceans contain profound mysteries beneath the waves, and *Oceans: Our Blue Planet* reveals those breathtaking stories from the deep. From the ice-crusted Arctic to the crystalline tropics, explore the dramatic events and intimate lives of the ocean's most extraordinary creatures.



Standard 4 members and above receive a select number of one-time-use IMAX e-passes, and all Giving Society members receive discounts on ticket prices!

Tickets Purchase member tickets at any Aquarium ticketing location or by phone at 617-973-5200. Films, prices, and showtimes are subject to change.

Rentals Private screening and facility rentals, call 617-720-5104.

Parties IMAX birthday parties, call 617-973-6508.

Check neaq.org for a complete list of films and showtimes!





**New England
Aquarium**

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20M/RD

HALLOWEEN ON THE HARBOR

Sunday, October 27

NEW TIME!

1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Harbor View Terrace Tent

Registration opens for Premium members on October 2 and
for Standard members on October 3 at neaq.org/memberevents.