

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Taking Action for the
Ocean Together



**New England
Aquarium**

Protecting the blue planet



**A habitable planet needs a healthy ocean.
A healthy ocean needs all of us.**

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

2022 was an exciting and impactful year at the New England Aquarium, and we're happy to share our annual report.

With your help, we continued the great work of nurturing and caring for our animals, building on our commitment to an inclusive and accessible waterfront, developing global partnerships, and engaging and supporting resilient communities to protect the blue planet.

Climate change is affecting the ocean and its inhabitants, forcing animals to change their feeding, mating, and migration patterns. Our researchers and other staff members help by studying the habits and habitats of marine animals, advocating for policy changes, and engaging and educating the public.

In 2022, we published findings that detail more than 20 years of shark research in the Dry Tortugas, worked with policymakers and leaders to develop and support policies that aid our rescue and rehabilitation activities, and received a significant gift for our Marine Conservation Action Fund that will benefit ocean-centered communities worldwide for years to come.

Our work to protect the blue planet is critical. With your help, we will continue to ensure a vital and vibrant ocean for generations to come by developing exhibits and educational experiences to promote discovery, continuing scientific research to provide solutions to ocean challenges and influence policy, and developing programs to create engaged, resilient communities in Boston and beyond.

Thank you for your trust and support!

Sincerely,



Vikki N. Spruill
President and CEO



Taking Action for the Ocean Together

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 2022 thanks to your support.

USING SCIENCE TO PROTECT ANIMALS AND THE OCEAN

Long-running Shark Study Welcomes Animal Care Experts to the Team

For the first time, two members of the New England Aquarium's (NEAq) Animal Care team—Lindsay Phenix, senior aquarist, and Michael O'Neill, manager of the Giant Ocean Tank (GOT)—joined a group of scientists from the Aquarium's Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life (ACCOL) in the Dry Tortugas to aid ongoing nurse shark research. This new partnership aims to foster greater collaboration between the Aquarium's Animal Care staff and its researchers to better understand and mitigate the threats facing our ocean.

This shark project, based in the Dry Tortugas National Park, Florida, has become one of the longest-running studies of its kind. Nurse shark courtship and mating behavior has been studied at this site for over 30 years by Harold "Wes" Pratt, a retired scientist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association and adjunct ACCOL scientist. Wes and his wife, Theo, have been conducting research here every summer since the 1990s, and ACCOL's Dr. Nick Whitney, senior scientist and chair of the Center's Fisheries Science and Emerging Technologies Program, has joined them for 13 summers since 1998.

O'Neill was particularly eager to participate in the project because of NEAq's interest in acquiring a nurse shark for the exhibit. O'Neill says the previous nurse shark was transferred to the New York Aquarium during GOT tank renovations in 2012.

"Working with nurse sharks is something we were eager to get experience with in preparation for a new resident shark," says O'Neill. "It's important for Animal Care staff to observe the species they care for in the field. You get a much better sense of normal baseline activity; you can see a cross-section of natural behaviors, such as how and where they forage for food, how they behave with

other species, and what their activity levels are," O'Neill adds.

That kind of information can help the team decide how to provide as much of the natural environment in the exhibit as possible, consider what the "opportunities for enrichment and mental stimulus are, and how we can recreate the same foraging environments, different training techniques, things like that," O'Neill says.

For about 10 days over the summer, Phenix and O'Neill stayed in the Dry Tortugas, a 100-square-mile park roughly 70 miles from Key West consisting of seven small islands. They began their days kayaking to the shark mating area, where they would identify tagged sharks, observe behaviors, and assist with shark capture and tagging. The area, only accessible by boat or seaplane, is also home to coral reefs, marine life, and bird life.

"We were setting up the preliminary study site and helping gather census data on the sharks that were there, and began collecting breeding and mating behavior, footage, and intel, which is pretty exciting to be a part of," Phenix says.



Dr. Nick Whitney readies a nurse shark for tagging during fieldwork in the Dry Tortugas.



“There are all kinds of life around the Tortugas, and both Mike and Lindsay are such naturalists who understand so many different things about the animals living out there...so they not only supported our research but also expanded it because they uncovered some of these smaller sharks we don’t normally focus on,” Whitney says.

This decades-long study reveals new things about shark courtship and mating behavior and the sharks’ use of the Dry Tortugas as a breeding ground. The team recently released a paper documenting the project’s findings, reporting that this site is incredibly important to the sharks that use it, and several have used this same breeding ground for decades.

Given the success of the trip, Whitney says the Animal Care team will undoubtedly be invited next year. “They were a tremendous help to us on site, and we would love for this collaboration to continue,” he said.

Adjunct Scientist Wes Pratt and Giant Ocean Tank Manager Mike O’Neill work to record information on a nurse shark pup.

INSPIRING ACTION FOR THE OCEAN

Advocating for Sea Turtle Rescue Assistance

After battling frigid ocean temperatures, a Kemp's ridley sea turtle—later named Turmeric by Aquarium staff—was rescued in December 2021 from a beach in Wellfleet, Massachusetts. In addition to pneumonia, the small, critically endangered animal—one of more than 500 turtles found along Cape Cod beaches and treated by the Aquarium's Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation team last year—suffered fractures to its shell, right femur, and tibia. Turmeric is representative of the hundreds of migratory sea turtles who feed in the waters along Cape Cod Bay each summer before rapidly cooling water temperatures overwhelm their ectothermic systems, causing critical weakness that leads to illness, injury, and stranding.

For the last 25 years, Aquarium veterinarians and animal care staffers have treated thousands of sea turtles like Turmeric, but up to this point, funding for this work has come largely from the Aquarium's operating budget and donations.

To change that and help secure federal funding for the rescue and rehabilitation of stranded sea turtles, the New England Aquarium is advocating for the passage of the Sea Turtle Rescue Assistance Act of 2022 (H.R.7918 and S.4432), which will benefit organizations and institutions like ours. Last summer, Adam Kennedy, NEAq's rescue and rehabilitation director, and Dr. Charles Innis, the Aquarium's director of animal health, joined other partners including the National Aquarium in Baltimore, Maryland, and the South Carolina Aquarium to help advance this legislation.



Aquarium staff keep cold-stunned sea turtles that are too weak to swim afloat.

A SWEET PARTNERSHIP

Local Chocolatier Supports the Aquarium's Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Program

The New England Aquarium has worked to promote the conservation of sea turtles for the past quarter century. This work wouldn't be possible without members' support and dedicated partners like Phillips Chocolates. A beloved Boston-area chocolatier since 1925, Phillips sells a special New England Aquarium-themed box



of 18 crunchy caramel turtle delights. For every box sold, fifteen percent is donated to the Aquarium's critical sea turtle rescue and rehabilitation work.

"We make turtles, and the Aquarium rescues them, so there's a real connection," says Michael Pocrass, general manager of Phillips Chocolates. "And with our chocolates, we have the ability to do some good for the turtles and the environment." Plus, he adds, "the Aquarium has such a wonderful reputation, we were eager to support it."

The first Aquarium-themed chocolate turtles were created for Mother's Day in 2019, and Phillips—which also supports organizations that aid causes such as disabled veterans and breast cancer awareness—has offered the package to support the Aquarium's work ever since. Additionally, according to Pocrass, each year for a week in June, in celebration of World Ocean Day, five percent of all sales are donated to the New England Aquarium.

"It's a sweet way for people to enjoy chocolates or do something good [with] a gift," says Pocrass.



Left: Kemp's ridley turtle named Turmeric is about to be released back into the ocean. Right: Aquarium staff members Sarah Reiter, Charles Innis, and Alissa Weinman on their way to testify before Congress in support of the Sea Turtle Rescue Assistance Act.

In addition to collaborating on the bill's language, the New England Aquarium has been working closely with Massachusetts Senator Ed Markey to introduce the Senate version of the bill to help facilitate its passage and build bipartisan support.

The conservation of marine mammal species, such as seals and whales, among others, is currently supported by federal programs. Through the Prescott Grant Program, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has awarded more than \$67.6 million in competitive grant funding over the last 20 years to eligible marine mammal-stranding network participants to respond to and care for federally protected marine mammals. But this money does not support sea turtle work. To remedy this, Dr. Innis provided written and oral testimony to the United States House Committee on Natural Resources' Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife in support of the sea turtle bill on July 21, 2022.

If passed, the legislation would create a permanent grant program to fund sea turtle rescue, recovery, and research; authorize \$5 million in funding each year from 2023–2028; aid in developing criteria for awarding grants; and prioritize nonprofits with a record of this work.

Six sea turtle species are found in U.S. waters, and all of them are listed and protected under the Endangered Species Act. Four of those species—loggerhead, green, leatherback, and Kemp's ridley, which is the most endangered in the world—are treated by the Aquarium. These marine animals face significant challenges, including risks from bycatch, entanglement, climate change, and stranding.

After more than nine months of care—and following laser therapy, antibiotics, pain medication, and surgery—Turmeric, the endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtle, was released into the ocean on September 6, 2022.

As the Aquarium team readies for the next cold-stunning season, they're eager to know if the Sea Turtle Rescue Assistance Act will pass. Whatever happens, it won't lessen the dedication of the New England Aquarium to help sea turtles like Turmeric thrive.

HELPING OTHERS USE THE OCEAN RESPONSIBLY

Identifying Nearly 100 Right Whales in the Gulf of St. Lawrence

For 16 days last summer, scientists Amy Warren and Kelsey Howe from the New England Aquarium's Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life sacrificed sleep and terra firma to track North Atlantic right whales in Canada's Gulf of St. Lawrence. Despite bracing stiff winds and rough seas throughout, it was worth it.

Warren and Howe, in collaboration with teams from the University of New Brunswick and Canadian Whale Institute (CWI), chartered the fishing vessel *Jean-Denis Martin* and spent long days working through robust to-do lists. In addition to watch duties and managing their field supplies, the scientists identified animals via photo identification, conducted health assessments, took biopsies, collected fecal samples, deployed a drone to record imagery, and collected oceanographic sampling.

Work in the field is rarely predictable, and during the past few summers, right whales have strayed from previous migratory routes in the Bay of Fundy to waters further north, to the Gulf of St. Lawrence in Canada.

Since 2017, right whales have aggregated in large numbers in the Shediac Valley (located in the southern portion of the Gulf of St. Lawrence) during summer months. However, last year, thanks to sightings made during aerial surveys by the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans, they appeared to be aggregating even farther offshore, in the western Bradelle Valley, which is about 30 nautical miles beyond Shediac.

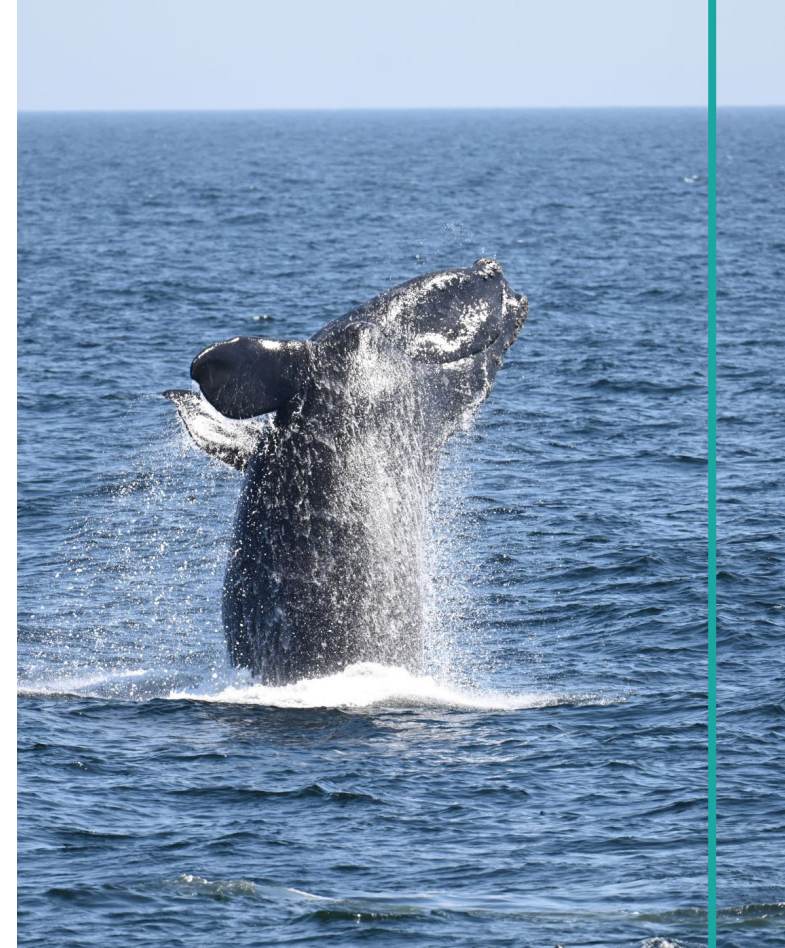
"Thirty extra nautical miles may not sound like much," says Warren, "but for a vessel like the *Jean-Denis Martin* that typically travels around eight knots, this meant it would take 10 to 12 hours to travel

out to the whale aggregation instead of the usual six."

During two multi-day expeditions aboard the vessel, the scientists recorded 234 right whale sightings of 81 individuals in the Bradelle Valley. The sightings were hard won as the animals were spread far apart in the vast gulf waters. "We documented a few small surface active groups, but for the most part whales were keeping to themselves and (busy) on long dives," says Howe. Among the animals spotted were four mom and calf pairs.

They also photographed Meridian (Catalog #1403), a recently entangled whale. "Given the late time of day and sea conditions, we were not able to do anything but further document his entanglement and condition, and report his position to rescue teams," says Howe. "Unfortunately, he was never relocated."

Aside from numerous sightings, the scientists also gathered a number of samples, including four fecal samples (which will be further studied for hormones, microbiomes, and plankton content at three different institutions), and biopsy samples for an ongoing epigenetics study. Perhaps most excitingly, Warren and Howe were able to collect biopsy samples from right whale #4180 and her 2022 calf. The calf was one of only two calves (out of 15) that were not sampled on the calving grounds that winter, and #4180 had never been sampled before.



The calf of right whale Slalom (Catalog #1245) was photographed breaching in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

In addition to time on the larger *Jean-Denis Martin*, Warren and Howe, along with two CWI researchers, conducted small-boat photo-ID and biopsy surveys in the Shediac Valley and the Baie des Chaleurs. Over the course of four expeditions, they documented 24 sightings of 17 right whales, including some new whales that had not been seen by the larger crew. Most notably, the small-boat crew found Snow Cone (#3560), a known entangled whale and mom of the year, alone without her 2022 calf. This was her only sighting in the Gulf of St. Lawrence last summer and her first sighting without her calf.

Despite some challenging weather and long hauls far into the Gulf of St. Lawrence waters, it was a successful summer field season. As Warren and Howe processed the samples collected on their trip, they were already pondering where the right whales would appear next summer.



*Top: Catalog #3942 during a close approach for biopsy sampling.
Bottom: Aquarium researchers direct the boat toward a right whale sighted at the end of the day, just in time to photograph before losing daylight.*

HELPING TO CREATE ENGAGED, RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Building Global Partnerships to Support Locally-led Ocean Action Worldwide

The Aquarium's Marine Conservation Action Fund (MCAF), which offers small grants and fellowships to ocean conservation leaders worldwide, is poised to have its biggest impact ever in 2023 thanks to a \$2 million gift from longtime Aquarium supporters Alan and Lisa Dynner.

MCAF grants support community-based projects spearheaded by local conservationists in over 60 countries who are gathering key data on imperiled marine species and engaging communities to create solutions that benefit ocean health and support food insecurity and livelihoods around the world. Past work has included promoting the conservation of whitetip sharks in Haiti, gaining insights into the pandemic's effects on coastal fisheries in Sri Lanka, and protecting sea turtle nesting areas in Venezuela.

In 2022, MCAF celebrated funding its 200th project as the Dynners' gift marks a new period of growth for the program.

The vision for the future is to:

- Expand the MCAF Fellows Program, which sponsors selected conservation leaders and offers long-term financial and professional support, mentoring, and visibility, all aimed at building community engagement and resiliency.
- Increase the grant sizes and double the annual number of projects the program can support.



Members of The Haiti Project work with local fishermen on species monitoring.

GLOBAL OCEAN CONSERVATION

Advancing Ocean Conservation through Philanthropy

Lisa and Alan Dynner believe the best way to preserve ocean health is through the combined expertise, innovation, and engagement of those working for solutions at the local level, which the Aquarium's Marine Conservation Action Fund (MCAF) has championed since its inception in 1999.



"We are inspired to help MCAF because it is a unique program through which the Aquarium extends its conservation reach globally," explains Alan. "It enables local scientists to work on a continuing basis with their local populations, governments, and organizations on such projects as helping endangered sawfish in Madagascar, in Mexico, and in the Philippines; establishing a shark sanctuary in Costa Rica; sea turtle conservation in Ghana, Liberia, and Indonesia; and preserving giant blue whales in Sri Lanka."

The Dynners are longtime supporters of the New England Aquarium. Lisa recently joined the Board of Trustees, while Alan is an Ambassador, former Trustee, and a member of the MCAF advisory committee.

Alan and Lisa would like their \$2 million donation to inspire others to give. "We hope that our gift is a catalyst in raising money from other individuals, foundations, and corporations, so that MCAF can continue to expand its activities." As Lisa points out, "the projects that MCAF supports not only protect the ocean and marine animals, but also help the people that depend on them."



Top left: Andrés López of Misión Tiburón in Costa Rica. Photo by David Garcia. Right: Misión Tiburón works with youth on conservation education.



- Launch new grants to support the operations and development of fellows' organizations.
- Support fellows' efforts to train early-career ocean practitioners.
- Fund the second MCAF Global Fellows Summit to be held at the New England Aquarium in the fall of 2023.
- Catalyze the program's fundraising goal of \$4.9 million to fully realize MCAF's five-year strategic plan.

In the future, MCAF Program Director Elizabeth Stephenson envisions the program offering multi-year grants to further the impact of MCAF-funded projects. "Conservation doesn't happen overnight, so we need to invest in leaders for the long term," says Stephenson.

Two such leaders are MCAF Fellow Andrés López and MCAF grantee Ilena Zanella of Misión Tiburón in Costa Rica, who received new collaborative grant funding for a novel conservation project in Costa Rica. López and Zanella have worked together in the past to protect giant manta rays, sharks, and other marine life in Costa Rican waters, and their efforts led to the creation of the country's first-ever shark sanctuary. The new grant will support their

"Beca Azul," or Blue Fellows program, which seeks to engage the next generation of Costa Rican researchers in marine science and conservation, with a focus on women in the field.

According to Stephenson, community building—like the kind enabled through the new funding available to MCAF Fellows—is a pivotal part of MCAF's strategic planning priorities. It also informs MCAF's overall approach to funding.

"The gap we feel we're filling in conservation is really around supporting increased representation by conservation leaders from low- and middle-income countries," says Stephenson. "Not only is it ethically important but it's also the right way to do conservation in terms of lasting impact."

In 2023, all fellows will be invited to Boston for the second MCAF Fellows Summit. The event is an exciting opportunity for the fellows to connect and share their work not only with each other but with Aquarium scientists.

"We're looking to have, as [MCAF Fellow Dr. Asha Devos] says, 'a local hero on every coastline,'" Stephenson says.

Custom Shoes Aid African Penguin in Recovery from Persistent Condition

How do you get a penguin to wear shoes? For Beach Donkey, a 24-year-old African penguin who needed booties as part of her treatment for a foot condition, the answer was strolling privileges around the Aquarium.

It took a dedicated team of Aquarium veterinarians and Animal Care staff nearly three years to successfully treat Beach Donkey for pododermatitis, an inflammatory condition of the feet that can lead to lesions on the pad which, if left untreated, can cause progressive infection of the bone and loss of mobility. Also known as “bumblefoot,” pododermatitis affects both wild penguins and those in zoos and aquariums and is caused by a variety of factors, including age and genetics.

Along with directly treating the foot lesions, the team worked to resolve any environmental factors that could be exacerbating Beach Donkey’s condition. As part of her treatment protocols, the team used kitty litter to keep her feet dry and help debride the calluses, and they placed a mat on Beach Donkey’s territory in the exhibit to minimize irritation to her feet. To prevent further abrasions, and in anticipation of habituating her to post-surgical bandages, the team devised custom shoes for Beach Donkey.

Initially, the team believed Beach Donkey would use her shoes on exhibit, so getting her accustomed to wearing them was imperative.

“We wanted Beach to continue to come to her feeds on exhibit, so we considered other ways to reward her in addition to giving her fish,” said Amanda Barr, a senior penguin trainer at the Aquarium.

Beach Donkey’s walks around the Aquarium weren’t just stimulating for her; they were important training in moving around in her custom footwear.

“Training an animal to be comfortable with this level of interaction and treatment requires very small steps and a positive trainer-animal relationship,” said Assistant Curator of Penguins Eric Fox, when describing the team’s approach. “Nuanced understanding of each individual penguin and what they find reinforcing is crucial to a trainer’s success and is essential to the health of each penguin.”

Beach Donkey took in the novel sights as she explored the Aquarium’s exhibit halls and office spaces with the team. These excursions aided her training by helping her grow more adept at walking with footwear and by acclimating her to having shoes put on and taken off. After a successful molt last summer, Beach was able to undergo additional surgery on her feet to remove the diseased tissue. With the success of her surgery, Beach Donkey no longer had to wear her shoes. Still, all that training helped immensely as Beach Donkey recovered from her procedure.



An African penguin named Beach Donkey received specialized care—including shoes and field trips around the Aquarium—to treat a foot problem.

During many weeks of healing, the Aquarium's Animal Health team and other staff members closely monitored Beach Donkey's feet, gradually adjusting her bandaging as she worked up to walking on hard, flat surfaces again. Beach Donkey officially returned to the penguin exhibit fulltime on October 1.

Given the success of Beach Donkey's treatment, Aquarium staff aim to share what they've learned to support the care of birds like Beach Donkey in other zoos and aquariums.

"Beach Donkey's success story is the perfect example of the individualized care that we provide to our animals," said Fox. "Through collaboration and innovative approaches, we do whatever it takes to provide the best life for each penguin in our colony. It enhances the well-being of our animals and, just as important, our collective understanding of an endangered species."



Top: Aquarists Amanda Barr and Brendan Dugan with Beach Donkey. Bottom: Beach Donkey is rewarded with a walk around the Giant Ocean Tank.



FINANCIAL RESULTS (in thousands of dollars)

Operating Revenue and Support

	FY 2022	FY 2021
Admissions – Individuals and Groups	\$26,642.0	\$19,295.8
Retail Sales – Food, Gift Shop, and Events	4,455.3	2,761.1
Memberships – Individual, Family, and Corporate	2,845.8	2,382.6
Gifts and Grants	12,625.9	11,159.7
Federal and State Grants	11,200.7	13,694.3
Sponsored Program Grants and Contracts	3,454.2	2,927.2
Other	843.9	474.9
Total Operating Revenue and Support	\$62,067.8	\$52,695.6

Operating Costs and Expenses

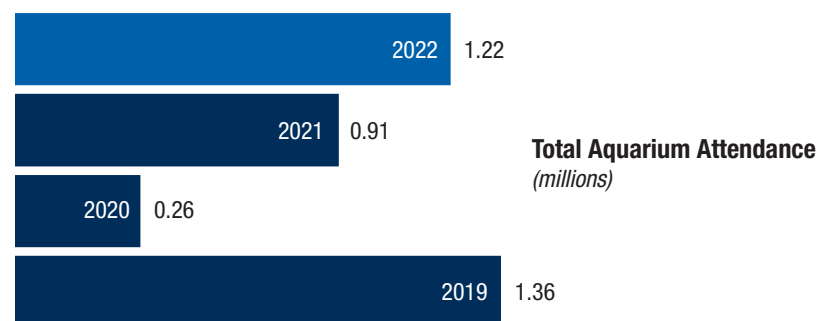
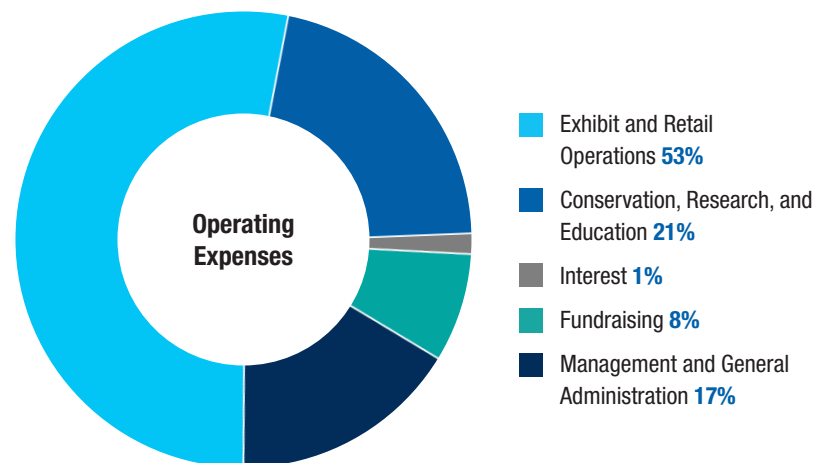
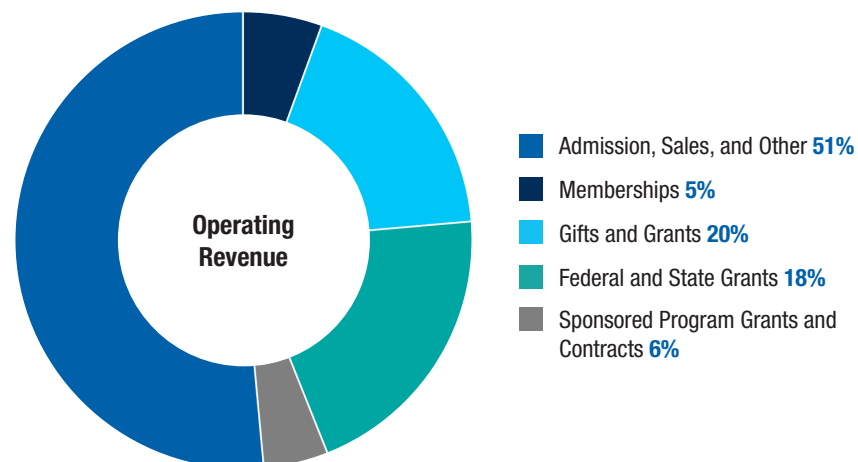
Research, Conservation, and Education	\$9,660.1	\$6,809.9
Exhibit and Retail Operations	23,938.1	18,972.1
Management and General Administration	7,455.2	5,204.2
Fundraising	3,517.0	2,752.4
Interest	659.6	606.7
Total Operating Costs and Expenses	\$45,230.0	\$34,345.3

Net Assets from Operations	\$16,837.8	\$18,350.3
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Non-operating Revenues and Expenses

Non-operating Revenues	\$560.0	\$641.2
Investment Return (Loss)	(2,285.9)	2,291.7
Net Change in Beneficial Interest in Perpetual Trust	(511.2)	508.8
Increase in Net Assets	\$14,600.7	\$21,792.0

	FY 2022	FY 2021
Net Assets		
Beginning of Year	\$66,472.1	\$44,680.1
End of Year	\$81,072.8	\$66,472.1



*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.

Thank you to our supporters.

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

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