



Exhibits

Media contact:
Shedd Aquarium Public Relations
(312) 692-3330

A WALK ALONG THE COAST

*The **Oceanarium** at the Shedd Aquarium*

The 3-million-gallon saltwater **Oceanarium** at Shedd Aquarium houses Beluga whales, Pacific white-sided dolphins, Alaska sea otters and harbor seals which thrive in a dramatic re-creation of a Pacific Northwest coastal environment. Nature trails wind through a stretch of rugged rain forest, immersing guests in a naturalistic ecosystem that demonstrates the fragile relationship that exists between animals, plants, land and water. In a separate exhibit area, a colony of penguins lives in a Falkland Islands habitat. The **Oceanarium** offers millions of inland guests the opportunity to see and learn about marine animals they might not have a chance to see in the wild.

NATURE WALK

The 170,000-square-foot **Oceanarium** presents a striking contrast to the original Aquarium galleries. Guests emerge from their underwater safari through the Aquarium and are transported into the great outdoors of the Pacific Northwest. The setting represents a stretch of coastline from Northern California up to Prince William Sound in Alaska.

Guests feel like they are walking through the wilderness. The first leg of the journey takes visitors through a section of lush, temperate rain forest complete with 70 different species of trees, shrubs and plants. Guests pass trickling streams and re-created rock formations that document the region's complex geological history. Authentic wildlife sounds fill the air, enhancing guests' experience.

ALASKA SEA OTTERS

The two-level, 50,000-gallon sea otter habitat offers guests two views of these active animals, above sea level and under water. Several of Shedd Aquarium's sea otters were rescued as orphaned pups from Prince William Sound in Alaska after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill. Shedd Aquarium's animal-care specialists continue to monitor the otters as part of ongoing research about the spill's long-term effects on wildlife. Another otter was found stranded on an Alaskan beach in the summer of 1990 and was sent by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to Shedd Aquarium, one of the few U.S. facilities experienced in nurturing and rehabilitating delicate sea otter pups.

TIDE POOL

Along the coastline, beachcombers are likely to encounter tide pools similar to Shedd Aquarium's re-creation in the **Oceanarium**. Pools of water trapped in rocky hollows during low tide are home to a variety of small creatures, including sea stars, fishes and anemones.

BELUGA WHALES AND PACIFIC WHITE-SIDED DOLPHINS

At the edge of the **Oceanarium**'s Sitka spruce forest, guests will find beluga whales and Pacific white-sided dolphins. Three connecting pools are visible, and a fourth, the veterinary pool, is concealed under the rockwork. Whale Harbor, the largest of the ocean habitats, contains 2 million gallons of water. Misty Passage and the Grainger Encounter Habitat hold another 230,000 gallons, Secluded Bay 400,000, gallons and the adjoining veterinary pool has a 60,000-gallon capacity.

The massive pools are irregularly shaped, offering the animals varied and interesting swimming routes. These habitats, which far exceed government requirements, were designed to meet Shedd's extremely high goals of excellent marine mammal care. Underwater channels and alcoves provide the animals room to explore and enjoy privacy. Movable underwater gates allow them access to the adjoining pools. Behavioral presentations with the dolphins and belugas take place daily. These educational presentations highlight many of the natural behaviors of these animals, including vocalizing, spyhopping, breaching and tail walking.

Training is an essential component of good animal care; it helps us to enhance the quality of each animal's life by teaching it to cooperate in its own care. It also provides them with mental and physical stimulation. While the content changes regularly, a strong conservation message concerning habitat and animal preservation remains constant in Shedd's presentations, which take place in the 1,000-seat amphitheater that overlooks Whale Harbor. From their seats, guests are treated to a spectacular view of Lake Michigan, which seems to blend into the water line of the **Oceanarium** habitat.

HARBOR SEALS

As guests continue along the nature trail, they discover Seal Bight, a cove that is home to the **Oceanarium's** harbor seals. Seal Bight features an area of rocky shoreline and a 25,000-gallon pool for the animals where the harbor seals can lounge on the shoreline or zip through water.

UNDERWATER VIEWING GALLERY

When guests descend to the underwater viewing gallery, they experience a different perspective of the whales and dolphins. A wall of 10 20-foot-long acrylic windows allows guests to come eye-to-eye with the whales and dolphins in their underwater world.

In addition to featuring animal favorites like penguins, beluga whales, dolphins and sea otters, Shedd's new *Polar Play Zone* gives children a chance to learn through play. Children can move, create and pretend; they'll have the ability to touch live animals and even splash in water. The Underwater Viewing Gallery gives families an opportunity to learn about wide-ranging habitats and contrasting adaptations.

PENGUINS

Because penguins only exist in the Southern Hemisphere and are not found in the Pacific Northwest, the **Oceanarium's** colony of penguins occupies a private habitat on the lower level of the facility. Two species of these marine birds (rockhopper and magellanic) live together in a re-creation of a Falkland Islands environment.

MAC ARTHUR SPECIAL EXHIBIT GALLERY

This 3,000-square-foot gallery is located on the mezzanine level of the **Oceanarium** and features changing exhibits focused on aquatic animals.

INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMMING

Shedd Aquarium's Interpretive and Guest Services Department is on hand to answer questions, help guests connect with the aquatic world and provide in-depth information about a variety of aquatic topics. *Otter, Penguin and Beluga Whale Narrations* Join Shedd Aquarium narrators at the sea otter, penguin and beluga whale habitats for informal talks about these amazing animals. Feel free to ask questions during these daily 20-minute sessions. Check the "Today's Events" board in the **Oceanarium** lobby for starting times. Narrations are free with a One-day Pass.

GIFT STORES

A gift store offering a collection of fine gifts, jewelry, souvenirs and educational materials is located on the mezzanine level of the **Oceanarium**. (A second store is located off the Aquarium's foyer.)

AUDITORIUM

The 277-seat auditorium is located at the south end of the mezzanine level and features short film presentations and interpretive programming.

RESTAURANTS

Enjoy lunch and a panoramic view of Chicago's scenic lakefront in Soundings restaurant or select from a variety of foods in the Bubble Net food court. For restaurant reservations and hours, call 312/692-3277.

For more information on the **Oceanarium**, check out Shedd's Web site at *www.sheddaquarium.org*.
Shedd Aquarium is supported by the people of Chicago through the Chicago Park District.

-30-