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Sea Life Park transforms reef tank to shark exhibit and interactive program

Honolulu, HI (February 29, 2012) – As part of an extensive program to refresh, renew and reinvigorate Sea Life Park, the management is bidding goodbye to one of the Park’s icons—the Hawaiian Reef Tank.

The tank is being renovated and the sea creatures moved to new homes to make room for the Park’s first entirely new exhibit in 30 years: the Hawaiian Shark Tank exhibit. Fifteen native Hawaiian sharks will be visible not only from outside the tank but by guests donning special masks that allow them to descend into a protective cage and be surrounded by the sharks. The underwater experience will be called Shark Trek.



The exhibit will include Sandbar Sharks, Scalloped Hammerhead Sharks, and two types of Black Tip Sharks. All are commonly found in the Hawaiian Islands. Jerry Pupillo, general manager of Sea Life Park, stated: “This is the most exciting development the Park has undertaken in 30 years. It is the centerpiece of a comprehensive renovation program that has included upgrades in many other areas of the Park, including animal exhibits and

amenities for our human guests. However, it is the shark exhibit that will certainly be the center of attention. We have already had tremendously positive response from our travel industry partners and customers.”

Renovation of the reef tank included removing the entire roof and surrounding tiles, draining the tank and repairing the windows, installing a cage for underwater viewing and making improvements consistent with the behavior of sharks. As sharks must constantly stay in motion in order to secure oxygenated water through their gills, impediments that

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prevent smooth swimming were removed. The sharks, which average about 3.5 feet in length, will enjoy 280,000 gallons of water that is refreshed daily with water from the open ocean just off the coast across from the Park. The former inhabitants of the tank have been relocated to other areas of the park or donated to local aquariums.

The Shark Trek experience will begin as guests descend a stairway directly into a cage fitted with stainless steel netting. The guest may choose to utilize a full-face mask or a helmet, both of which provide an air supply. Underwater sound equipment will enable the guests to hear the guide discuss the sharks and answer questions for a two-way interactive experience. Six guests at a time may participate. The introductory cost for the experience is \$99.99 plus tax.

Facts about sharks



Black Tip Shark



Sandbar Shark

- The shark, or *manō*, is woven into the fabric of Native Hawaiian culture. Early Hawaiians worshiped, cared for and protected sharks as *'aumakua*, or family gods. The most important *'aumakua* is the shark, which is still held in reverence by Native Hawaiians today. Of all the animal deities, the shark is the greatest *'aumakua*.
- Sharks are a very unusual type of fish, in that they do not have one bone in their bodies. Their skeleton is composed entirely of cartilage.
- A shark's skin is covered with denticles, which are small, razor-sharp teeth. Denticles can be removed from a shark's body. After the small teeth are removed, the remaining skin can be made into very strong leather. A pair of shoes made from shark leather can last up to four times longer than shoes made with cowhide.
- Sharks have very good senses. Sometimes a shark is called "a swimming nose", for its great sense of smell. Sharks can easily detect prey that is in the sand, as well as at night. A shark also has a remarkable sensitivity to vibrations in the water. It can feel the movements made by other animals that are hundreds of feet away and can hear sounds from thousands of feet away.

- Most sharks give birth to their babies. Only a few sharks lay eggs. Most sharks have six to twelve babies at a time, but the Hammerhead and Tiger Shark can have as many as 40 babies at a time.
- There are 440 species of sharks.
- Question: What is more dangerous to people - sharks or wasps and bees?
Answer: wasps and bees. Every year, 100 people die from wasp or bee stings, yet hundreds of millions of people go swimming, and sharks kill only about six people.
- Every year, people kill thousands of sharks. They are killed for food, oil, skins and sport. Many sharks are killed incidentally when fishermen use long lines or gill nets. In some cultures, sharks are still prized for their fins to make soup, which leads to excessive hunting and cruel killing.

About Sea Life Park Hawai'i

Sea Life Park Hawai'i is not only a fascinating visitor attraction, it is a repository of knowledge, a refuge and a habitat for some of Hawai'i's most important and beloved sea creatures. Guests swim with dolphins, interact with sea lions, feed sea turtles, and dive with sea rays in an educational and entertaining manner found nowhere else in Hawai'i.

Located north of Hanauma Bay, Sea Life Park Hawai'i features a beautifully designed park with reefs, lagoons, pools, and theaters. Both adults and children can take part in thrilling water activities and exhilarating encounters with marine mammals. Give your entire family an adventure to look forward to and make a reservation today. The park is open daily from 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For more information, visit the Park's website at www.sealifeparkhawaii.com or call (808) 259-2500.

Sea Life Park is a member of the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums and is owned and operated by Palace Entertainment.

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