


SEA *Change*

The Journal of **GEORGIA AQUARIUM**





Georgia Aquarium is a leading non-profit dedicated to aquatic science that engages humanity in the care and preservation of the natural world. We do this by helping people see the world differently, whether it's amazing our guests with up-close encounters with the largest variety of aquatic life in North America, or sharing our insights with others in the global scientific community that lead to important discoveries. We believe we can make a difference by showing how humankind, aquatic animals and the world's waters are connected and inspiring people to action.

While we strive to entertain our guests by enabling them to come face-to-face with whales, penguins and thousands of other aquatic animals, Georgia Aquarium is just as committed to our values of education, outreach, research and conservation.

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by Mike Leven, Chairman and CEO, Georgia Aquarium

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SPONSORED EDUCATION ADMISSIONS

Our Sponsored Education Admissions program allows students from Georgia's Title I schools free or reduced admission to the Aquarium, ensuring that all students, regardless of life circumstance, have access to our resources.

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VETERANS IMMERSION PROGRAM

Georgia Aquarium is committed to serving the brave men and women who have served us. The Veterans Immersion Program enables injured military personnel to experience the healing properties of water, as they swim and dive in our 6.3 million-gallon Ocean Voyager exhibit.

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RESEARCH and CONSERVATION

With our extraordinary collection comes a responsibility to understand and protect these species. We do that through research—in an aquarium setting and around the world—as we help to conserve the ocean's fragile environment and the organisms that live within it.

12



SPONSORS and DONORS

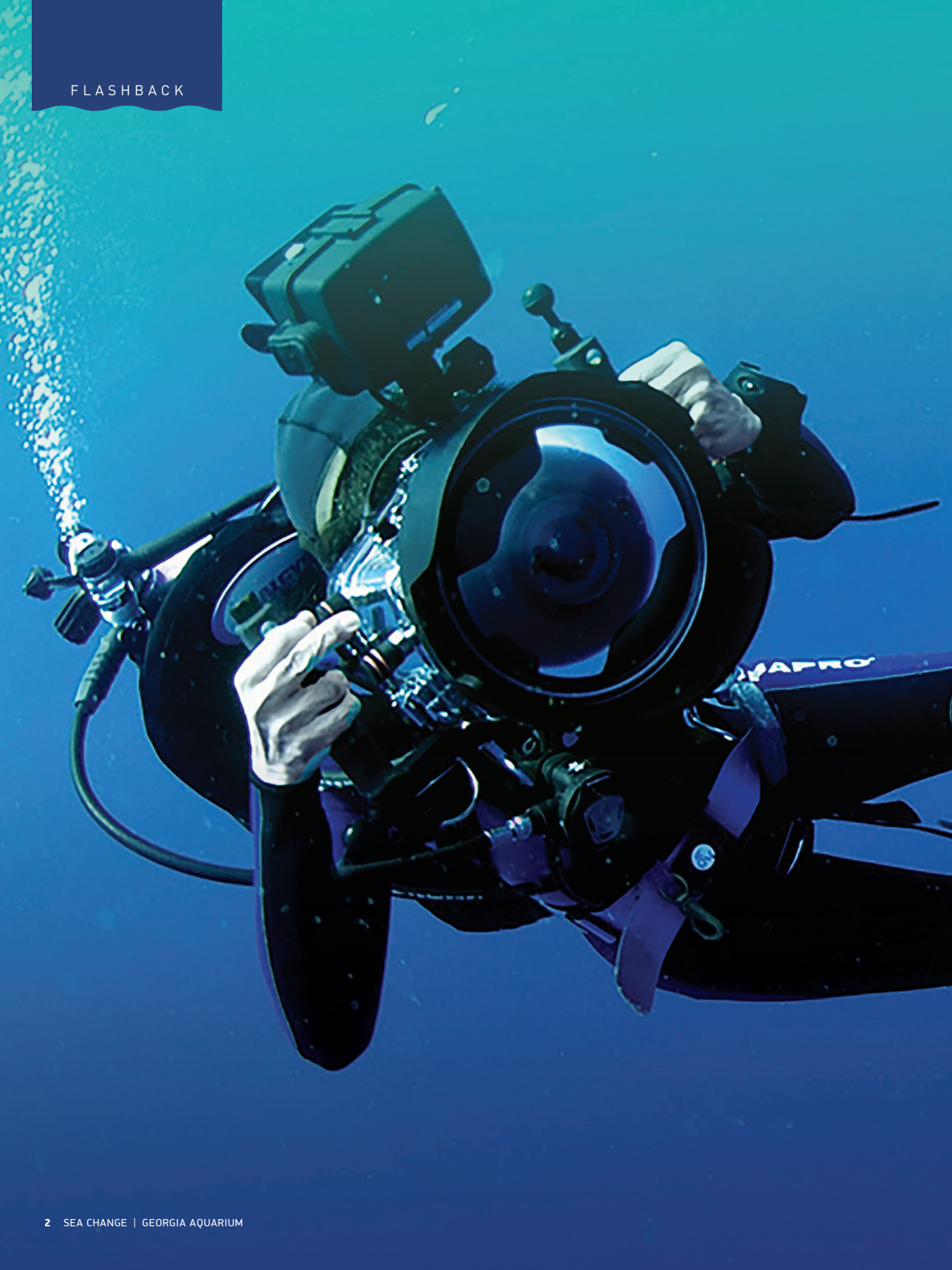
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LOOKING AHEAD

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FLASHBACK



Perfect



WHAT AN AMAZING
10 YEARS THIS HAS
BEEN FOR ALL OF US AT
GEORGIA AQUARIUM.

AS I LOOK BACK,
I AM AWED BY THE

Sea Change

IN OUR WAKE.

I AM SO GRATIFIED
BY ALL THAT WE'VE
ACCOMPLISHED, AND
SO ENCOURAGED
ABOUT WHAT
LIES AHEAD.

by Mike Leven
Chairman and CEO
Georgia Aquarium

THE EVIDENCE OF OUR SUCCESS IS AS CLEAR AS OUR AQUARIUM'S WATERS

Our thousands of wondrous marine animals, more than 100 exhibits across seven major galleries and more than 24 million visitors who have entered our doors.

And then look outside our doors. Georgia Aquarium has led the urban resurgence around Centennial Olympic Park. We are a major City of Atlanta employer and generator of out-of-state revenues. Ours has been a very positive fiscal impact for our community.

And those are our most visible signs of success. There have been many other contributions of which we are immensely proud. Our Sponsored Education Admissions Program has provided free or reduced admission to more than 250,000 students at Title I schools. Our Veterans Immersion Program has enabled more than 1,600 military personnel and veterans to experience the healing properties of water. And our extraordinary research efforts are helping to conserve and protect the waters of the world and the animals that inhabit them.

Georgia Aquarium exists to protect and conserve the beauty of aquatic life and to share the power of the underwater world in a way that will inspire commitment for generations to come.

Without your commitment, none of this would be possible. Thank you for joining us on this journey, for these 10 incredible years, and for what is sure to be an exciting sea change ahead.



Mike Leven
Chairman and CEO
Georgia Aquarium

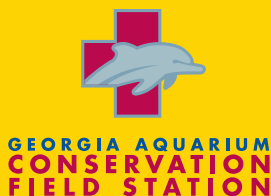
“TOP 5”
ANIMAL
ATTRACTION
— *FamilyFun magazine*

AT OPENING,
MORE
AQUATIC LIFE
THAN ANY OTHER AQUARIUM
AT THE TIME
— Guinness Book of World Records

50/
GUESTS FROM
143 COUNTRIES
HAVE VISITED



2005



GEORGIA AQUARIUM AND ITS AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS
ARE COMMITTED TO EDUCATING, INSPIRING AND
ENTERTAINING CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS.

TOGETHER, EACH OF THESE ENTITIES INSPIRE THE CONSERVATION
OF THE WORLD'S AQUATIC BIODIVERSITY AND CONDUCT IMPACTFUL
CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH PROGRAMS TO HELP THESE ANIMALS.

10+
million

GALLONS OF WATER,
MAKING GEORGIA AQUARIUM
ONE OF THE WORLD'S
LARGEST AQUARIUMS

BEST

NORTH AMERICAN
AQUARIUM
— USA Today

6.3 million

GALLONS OF WATER, MAKING
OCEAN VOYAGER ONE OF THE WORLD'S
LARGEST INDOOR AQUATIC HABITATS

143/6

OF ALL 50 STATES AND
DISTRICTS ON SIX CONTINENTS
VOTED THE AQUARIUM



#1

AQUARIUM IN
THE U.S. AND
#2 AQUARIUM
IN THE WORLD
— 2015 TripAdvisor
Travelers' Choice awards

24+
million

NUMBER OF VISITORS TO
GEORGIA AQUARIUM SINCE OPENING
OUR DOORS IN 2005

2015

leagues ahead

OPENING NEW WORLDS
FOR OUR CHILDREN





for a child, to stand before a larger-than-life ocean is a wondrous sight — but it is a wonder not all children will experience. Ninety percent of Georgia’s students at Title I schools have never seen the ocean. At Georgia Aquarium, it is part of our mission to help these young children experience firsthand the marvels of the living sea.

Our Sponsored Education Admissions (SEA) program allows students from Title I schools to come into the Aquarium and to encounter the wonders of the aquatic world — free of charge. “For so many students statewide, there is an inequity in accessibility to resources,” says Kristyn Tumbleson, Director of Education at Georgia Aquarium. “As an anchor

institution in Atlanta, we feel compelled to close that gap by making our resources — and the awe-inspiring experiences that take place here — accessible to all students in our state.”

Such access is critical for our children’s education. Every day in school, children are reading about science, technology and math, but when they enter



Georgia Aquarium, all that they've read in textbooks truly comes alive. They see more than 10 million gallons of water. They come face-to-face with whales, penguins and thousands of other aquatic animals. "It all looks very different when experiencing it in person," says Kristyn. "They see that what they're learning in the classroom is being done in the field every day — in really cool ways. It awakens their minds. It ignites their curiosity."

"One of the favorite parts of my job is seeing a student's eyes light up for the first time when they see a whale shark. All of a sudden the questions start running through their mind: What do they eat, where do they live in the natural world, how do we take care of them, and what about this window, how is that constructed? So, by the time they leave that gallery, they've asked questions in the realms of chemistry, biology, technology, engineering, math and more."

Watch and learn more about the Sponsored Education Admissions program at GeorgiaAquarium.org/SupportSEA.

Inside Georgia Aquarium, there are 200 unique careers alone. "Seeing these different career paths shows children that what they're learning in the classroom really could lead to something real and tangible one day," says Kristyn. "We need the best and brightest minds — from children of all backgrounds, from all socioeconomic levels — to one day be innovating, inventing and solving the problems that our world faces."

To that end, Georgia Aquarium is making sure that all students are able to witness firsthand these amazing creatures and the immense technology behind our Aquarium's walls. For a young mind, these "aha" moments can be transformative, and every student deserves to experience those — not just the students whose families can afford the cost of admission.

"We're really in the business of opening students' eyes to the art of the possible," says Kristyn. "They come to the Aquarium and see worlds and careers they never knew existed. That's life changing. That's a future veterinarian, chemist, biologist or engineer that otherwise would not have been born."

The Sponsored Education Admissions program is funded entirely by private donors. During the 2015–2016 school year, we served nearly 50,000 students from Title I schools. There are one million more we hope to reach. With your help, we can open our doors, and a world of possibility, to these children who need it most.



NEARLY
50,000

OF STUDENTS VISITING WERE
FROM TITLE I SCHOOLS UNDER
OUR SPONSORED EDUCATION
ADMISSIONS PROGRAM

\$620,000

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR
THE SEA PROGRAM OVER THE
2015-2016 SCHOOL YEAR

1 million

STUDENTS HAVE BEEN WELCOMED
THROUGH OUR DOORS SINCE 2005

STUDENTS FROM

75

COUNTIES IN GEORGIA
PARTICIPATED IN THE SEA
PROGRAM IN 2015

50,000

OUR GOAL IS TO HAVE 50,000 STUDENTS
FROM TITLE I SCHOOLS VISIT THE
AQUARIUM EACH YEAR

\$14

IS ALL IT
TAKES TO
SUPPORT ONE
STUDENT

\$1.7+
million

RAISED FOR GEORGIA
AQUARIUM'S SEA PROGRAM
SINCE 2006

147,000+

STUDENTS WERE WELCOMED DURING
THE 2015-2016 SCHOOL YEAR

90%


OF STUDENTS AT GEORGIA'S
TITLE I SCHOOLS HAVE NEVER
SEEN THE OCEAN FIRSTHAND



VETERANS
IMMERSION
PROGRAM

A DEEP TRANSFO

PROVIDING A NEW OUTLOOK
FOR OUR VETERANS



OUR VETERAN MEN AND WOMEN HAVE SACRIFICED SO THAT ALL AMERICANS CAN ENJOY FREEDOM AND PEACE OF MIND.



Georgia Aquarium's Veterans Immersion Program (VIP) is our way of helping our injured veterans find their own freedom and peace.

VIP offers military personnel of all abilities—from quadriplegia or amputations to post traumatic stress or traumatic brain injuries—the opportunity to swim in 6.3 million gallons of water with whale sharks, manta rays and thousands of other animals. Designed as an adjunct therapy to complement current rehabilitation and reintegration programs, VIP provides a positive environment, where these veterans can let go, find quiet and peace and attain a different, more positive outlook on life.



RMATION



1,600

MILITARY PERSONNEL AND
VETERANS HAVE BEEN SERVED
BY THE VETERANS IMMERSION
PROGRAM, SINCE 2008

6.3 million

GALLONS OF WATER FOR
SCUBA DIVING AND SNORKELING

thousands

OF ANIMALS IN THE EXHIBIT
WITH THE SWIMMERS

100%

OF THE VETERANS
IMMERSION PROGRAM
IS FUNDED THROUGH
PRIVATE SUPPORT

*“I don’t have the words to describe
how amazing being in the water
with so much wildlife made me feel.
**I was at peace and finally
able to clear my mind
and just breathe.**”*

Watch and learn more
about the Veterans
Immersion Program at
[GeorgiaAquarium.org/
SupportVIP](https://GeorgiaAquarium.org/SupportVIP).

“Water is healing by nature,” says Susan Oglesby, who directs the Aquarium’s Dive Immersion Program. “Being in such a unique environment — the vastness of the water, these huge whale sharks and other animals — it allows the body and mind to disassociate from all the negativity. We often hear from veterans that their immersion experience was the first real sense of peace and joy that they’ve had since they were injured.”

Mike Hilliard, Senior Divemaster at Georgia Aquarium, served in the army in Iraq and Afghanistan. During his duty, Mike was shot and wounded, but it was losing friends in the war that proved even more painful. Not mentally prepared for those losses, he fell into a dark place. Then, while on vacation in the Dominican Republic, he discovered scuba diving, and as Mike describes it, “It completely changed my life.”

“As soon as I put my head under water, it just blocked everything out,” says Mike. “It was the sense of peace that I was looking for. When I came up, I

“I found that 100 percent of my focus and thoughts were on the amazing creatures I was sharing the water with. At no point did I have a single thought about my disease, limitations or any other problem. It was complete and total peace.”

knew I’d found my calling.” When Mike retired from the military, he chased the dream of becoming a professional scuba diver, which ultimately brought him to Georgia Aquarium.

Now working with other injured veterans, Mike comments, “These young men and women who come through the VIP program are living with their own demons, their own hard times that they’ve experienced in the military and overseas. Having that 30 minutes to clear their head, to swim beside these

“I felt like I was entering into another world. The sensations I felt were almost indescribable. All my deadlines, challenges and worries of life stood still.”

“As a combat wounded amputee, diving has given me peace, joy and freedom like no other activity ever has and likely ever will.”

beautiful animals, it allows them to get into what’s around them, instead of what’s inside them.”

Recreational rehabilitation through the VIP program gives veterans an alternative way to find relief from the issues and pressures they’re facing. Says Susan, “You’ve got people who are going through so much. Whether their pain is physical or mental or emotional, their thoughts and conversations every day are centered on their problems and the rehab. They come here and they’re out of their normal environment. It’s totally different, and so they let go.”

“It’s not just the veteran,” remarks Mike. “It’s also the family who wants their father and husband back. So when that veteran comes out of the water, and he has that smile on his face and that joy, his wife is able to see that; his kids are able to see that. They see the man that they knew before. I’m just happy that the Veterans Immersion Program can provide that for them.”

Georgia Aquarium’s Veterans Immersion Program is funded entirely by private support. Help provide our injured veterans the chance to experience a positive, life-changing moment with some of the world’s most magnificent animals. Help us to serve those who have served us so well.

RESEARCH &
CONSERVATION



Discovery **BENEATH** *the Surface*

EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE
OF OUR BLUE PLANET



Georgia Aquarium
is a world leader
in the research and
conservation of aquatic
animals and their natural habitats.
Through our work — in the aquarium
setting, and in fieldwork worldwide — we
strive to learn more about the underwater
world and apply our discoveries to the
conservation of marine life across the globe.

“A lot of people who visit the Aquarium know about the extraordinary collection that we have,” says Dr. Al Dove, Georgia Aquarium’s Director of Research and Conservation. “But they aren’t aware of all the amazing research and conservation activities that go on behind the scenes. All of that work is a really important part of our mission, because a healthy ocean is very important to a healthy planet for all of us.”

The ocean provides more than half of the oxygen we breathe, and about three billion people rely on seafood as a major source of protein. So it’s essential that we maintain a healthy ocean. At Georgia Aquarium, we want people to understand marine animals, and we want them to understand how these animals and a healthy ocean connect to their own future.

“One of the research projects that I’m most excited about is the work that we’ve been doing with whale sharks,” says Al.

BELUGAS

Our researchers study beluga whale populations in Bristol Bay, Alaska, to learn about the endangered population in the Cook Inlet. Georgia Aquarium not only sponsors this collaborative partnership, but also provides expertise in animal handling techniques.



“In collaboration with researchers from Emory University, we’ve sequenced the genome of this species, the first time that’s been done for a shark. This research is not only enabling us to understand and help conserve the whale shark species, but it’s providing information about immune systems, antibodies and more that can be applied to our own fight against diseases.”

Another important research effort at Georgia Aquarium is our long-running bottlenose dolphin

Yet another important initiative is our work with manta rays at Georgia Aquarium Conservation Field Station in Florida. We’ve recently discovered an abundance of manta rays in northeastern Florida, which is something that was unknown before. The manta ray species is very important. It’s endangered and we’re trying to understand more about them — why they’re in northeast Florida, where they come from, what they’re doing while they’re there, and where they go when they leave. That’s helping us to understand the conservation threats that this species faces, and what we can do to help protect it.

“It’s such an exciting time to be involved in research here at Georgia Aquarium,” says Al. “The sort of research we do results in scientific publications and presentations at national and international conferences. But what is tremendously gratifying for everyone who works here is when our findings are used to support conservation measures, nationally and internationally. We feel like we’re really making a difference for these species, ensuring that these animals have healthy populations and habitats long into the future.”

NEARLY
100

RESEARCH PROJECTS HAVE
BEEN LED OR SUPPORTED
BY GEORGIA AQUARIUM
RESEARCHERS SINCE 2004.

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS
AND CONFERENCE APPEARANCES
HAVE BEEN AUTHORED BY THE
AQUARIUM’S RESEARCH TEAM

130
+

Health and Environmental Risk Assessment (HERA). The bottlenose dolphin is a sentinel for coastal environmental health. Through our assessments of these marine mammals, we’re learning the impact that we as humans are having on the ocean environment as a result of stressors such as pollution and development.

We rely on your private support to ensure that we can continue our crucial research initiatives and conservation efforts. Please support Georgia Aquarium and help us to make a positive impact on the health and welfare of aquatic life around the world.



MANTA RAYS

Georgia Aquarium researchers conduct studies on manta ray migration off the coasts of **Florida and Mexico**. They use aerial surveys and satellite tags to learn why mantas gather there and where they may be going.

This research is done thanks to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Special Activity License program.



“Our mission is to protect these magnificent marine mammals and make sure they always have a future in the coastal waters of Florida that we all share.”

—Dr. Greg Bossart, Senior Vice President,
Chief Veterinary Officer, Georgia Aquarium



DOLPHINS

Georgia Aquarium's research team participates in the Atlantic bottlenose dolphin Health and Environmental Risk Assessment (HERA) in Florida and South Carolina. The goal is to better understand how dolphins respond to environmental stressors such as pollution and marine debris.



NMFS Research Permit No. 14352-03



WHALE SHARKS

Georgia Aquarium is a worldwide leader in whale shark research and conservation. Since 2004, our scientists have used satellite tags, aerial surveys and photo identification software to study and track sharks on a global scale, from Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula to St. Helena.

*Watch and learn more about our research and conservation efforts at **GeorgiaAquarium.org/SupportConservation**.*



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 ATTRACTION — BUT WHEN YOU LEARN THE MANY MEANINGFUL
 WAYS IN WHICH THE AQUARIUM IS MAKING A CONTRIBUTION TO OUR
 COMMUNITY AND TO THE WORLD, IT MAKES YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT
 GETTING INVOLVED AND CONTRIBUTING YOURSELF.”

—Matthew May, Donor

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HELP CREATE A SEA CHANGE

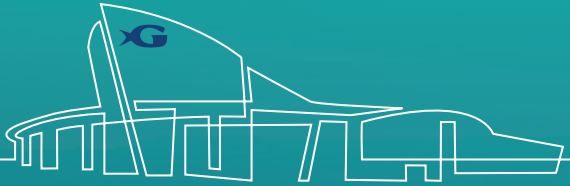
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RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION,
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CONTRIBUTES TO THESE EFFORTS,
BUT WE STILL NEED YOUR HELP.

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TOGETHER, WE CAN CREATE A
SEA CHANGE — IN OUR OCEAN,
AND FOR THE WONDROUS
LIFE THAT INHABITS IT.

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