

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



Dear Friends,

want to take a moment to say I hope this spring season finds you well. I know that for all of us it has been an unusual year at the very least, a year in which we at Georgia Aquarium have learned a lot.

Many aspects of 2020 were completely unforeseen – when we closed in March of 2020, we were awash in uncertainty, not knowing how long it would be before we could open our doors again. Nevertheless, our essential workers never stopped showing up, caring for all of the amazing animals that were counting on them. I want to personally thank all of our Sponsors, Foundations, Donors and Anchor Society Members for likewise showing up and helping Georgia Aquarium all year, but especially during those months of our closure.

This year provided a whole range of emotions for us as a facility. We experienced joy with the birth of a beluga whale calf; uncertainty with a building closure and extensive new protocols; the excitement of the brand new Sharks! Predators of the Deep gallery opening, along with a fantastic new entrance and entrance experience.

We could not have done any of it without you. I want to sincerely thank you for your unwavering support and enthusiasm.

Georgia Aquarium is a nonprofit committed to inspiring awareness and preservation of our ocean and aquatic animals worldwide.

Sincerely,

Brian Davis, PhD President and CEO, Georgia Aquarium



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SOUTHERN SEA OTTER

SCIENTIFIC NAME: Enhydra lutris nereis **CONSERVATION STATUS:** Endangered **ANIMAL FACT:** Sea otters balance their prey on their chest and open it with a rock.

BURRIA AQUARIUM

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s the Aquarium pivoted in March of 2020 to virtual offerings to keep our would-be guests engaged, special attention was paid to educational content.

ONLINE EDUCATION

With students learning remotely, the opportunity presented itself to engage with a wide audience of students from around the country. Georgia Aquarium became a free online learning resource, presenting our Deep Sea Learning series, as well as accompanying activity sheets for students and lesson plans and resources for parents and teachers.





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GEORGIA AQUARIUM GOES VIRTUAL



SCIENCE ON TAP

In October, we hosted our popular 21+ lecture series virtually. Dr. Lisa Hoopes, Director of Research, Conservation and Nutrition at Georgia Aquarium and Dr. Kady Lyons, Research Scientist at Georgia Aquarium presented "The Mysterious Lives of Sharks." Hosted by Dr. Al Dove, Vice President of Science and Education at Georgia Aquarium, the event had a live Q&A session after the presentation and all tickets went directly to our research and conservation efforts.

5K RACE

Georgia Aquarium's 3rd annual 5K was scheduled for March 13, 2020. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, our physical race was canceled and the event shifted to a virtual race. Despite this last minute change, the race proved to be successful with over 2,000 runners participating from as far as Seattle and Honolulu.

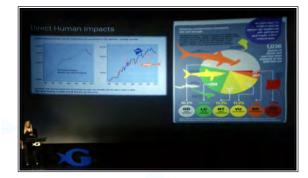
WEBCAMS

During our closure, we wanted to expand the ways our guests and followers could interact with Georgia Aquarium from the comfort and safety of their home. One part of this was adding more webcams to provide views into the daily routines of our animals! Alligators, Ocean Voyager, African penguins – and more can all be seen on our webcams.

GALLERY TOURS

Georgia Aquarium opened our doors virtually to take guests on a underwater experience through our galleries and behind the scenes areas.

695 Gallery tours purchased
5 Conferences purchased virtual tours
12 Different countries reached





his year, Georgia Aquarium – already the largest aquarium in the Western Hemisphere – got a whole lot bigger. In October 2020, Sharks! Predators of the Deep opened to the public.

Two full years in the making, this new gallery houses multiple species of charismatic, apex predator sharks. Great hammerheads, the largest of the hammerhead family, cruise alongside slow-moving sand tiger sharks and flashy silvertip sharks. Sharks! Predators of the Deep also hosts two new guest interactives: the Shark and Ray Interaction, and the Shark Cage Dive Experience! Both encounters are dynamic, exciting experiences unique to Georgia Aquarium.

> "As guests explore our new gallery, they will find themselves standing inches away from some of the most feared and mysterious animals on the planet. We hope to turn that fear into fascination and ultimately an appreciation for sharks."

- Dr. Brian Davis, President and CEO

SAND TIGER SHARK

SCIENTIFIC NAME: Carcharias taurus CONSERVATION STATUS: Vulnerable ANIMAL FACT: A sand tiger shark's spots fade as the animal matures.



RAISING SHARK AWARENESS

Our most important goal around the opening of Sharks! Predators of the Deep was to increase the public awareness of sharks and the threats they face in the ocean. We wanted this new gallery and our messaging around it to take guests on a path from fear to fascination - to show them that sharks are far from the mindless eating machines sensationalized in film. A big part of this was increasing awareness through our own research and conservation work. In the years leading up to the opening of the gallery in 2020, Aquarium experts undertook endeavors around the world in an effort to learn more about these fascinating animals.



Aquarium researchers worked with local fishermen to tag silky sharks in Belize, allowing us to study their movement and habitat use.

GLOBAL SHARK TRENDS

SHARKS!

IUCN REPORT: Sharks and Rays in Rapid Decline

Georgia Aquarium is an active partner and participant in The Global Shark Trends Project which has just concluded its multiyear assessment of extinction risk of 1,250 species of sharks, rays, and chimaeras. The Project is part of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, and in a unique commitment to conservation by the Aquarium, researcher Katelyn Herman is a specially trained Red List Officer for the IUCN.

Georgia Aquarium is one of two facilities in the U.S. to commit this way to the IUCN, with Herman as one of three Red List Officers at accredited facilities.

DIET AND MICROPLASTICS IN TIGER SHARKS

Microplastics, by virtue of their small size, are consumed by a variety of animals. When animals that consume microplastics are in turn preyed upon by sharks, the sharks then suffer from the secondary plastic consumption. By studying the diet and effect of microplastics on tiger sharks, we are able to better understand the cascading effect of plastic pollution on the ocean as a whole.

ENERGETICS IN GREAT HAMMERHEADS

This project proposes to measure swimming metabolic rates in large hammerhead sharks, which will allow us to better understand the energetic cost of swimming, hunting and feeding in large sharks.

StAR PROJECT: Zebra Shark Breeding to Boost Wild Population

Georgia Aquarium is a proud partner of the StAR Project, which is working to rebuild endangered zebra shark populations. Here at the Aquarium, genetically appropriate zebra shark pairs will produce egg cases that will then be sent to Raja Ampat, Indonesia to hatch and be released with the hope that their population will stabilize again.

SAND TIGER SHARKS: **Applied Husbandry Research**

Several pelagic species have declined by 71% since 1970

With the eventual goal of developing a sustainable population of sand tiger sharks in human care, Georgia Aquarium continues to work toward the successful breeding of sand tiger sharks in an aquarium habitat through partnerships with SEZARC and various AZA institutions. This ongoing project has given us valuable information that brings us closer to successful sand tiger shark breeding.

hroughout 2020, Georgia Aquarium stayed committed to our ongoing research and conservation efforts around the world and at home. Even through the ongoing pandemic and our three-month closure, that commitment continued.

While in-field work was not always possible, we were still able to conduct important research on shark population trends, microplastics, whale sharks, gained a Class R research license, and became vocal advocates of North Atlantic right whale conservation.

GREEN MORAY EEL

SCIENTIFIC NAME: Gymnothorax funebris **CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern **ANIMAL FACT:** The green moray eel is also known as the "green conger" and is one of the largest eel species.

RESEARCH & CONSERVATION



EXPEDITION in **SAINT HELENA**

For the last five years, Georgia Aquarium researchers have traveled to the tiny island of St. Helena, in the South Atlantic Ocean, to study whale sharks. In early 2020, the team returned again.

Over the course of our trips to St. Helena, we successfully tagged fifty animals, taught local children about whale sharks and conservation, and were instrumental in the development of the marine protected area around the Island. Through the extensive partnership and time spent with the local authorities, the whale shark research program begun by Georgia Aquarium will continue, even without our regular physical presence.

THE MANTA PROJECT

In August 2020, GAI was awarded research funding from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) for a cooperative agreement study. The 2-year study will determine potential overlap between oceanic manta rays (Mobula birostris) and BOEM's marine mineral extraction activities off the southeastern United States.



14 🔊 GEORGIA AQUARIUM

CORAL BANK SUPPLIES

Thanks to continued support through The UPS Foundation, we were able to build out new aquarium systems to house Coral Rescue Project specimens, and continue our work on Molasses Reef in the Florida Keys.

NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE ADVOCACY

The state marine mammal of Georgia, the North Atlantic right whale, is deeply endangered. North Atlantic right whales migrate every year to rest and have their calves in the warm waters of Georgia and northern Florida. Along the way, they pass through dangerous shipping lanes and must try to avoid fishing nets and other debris. Georgia Aquarium is committed to raising awareness and advocating for our state marine mammal whenever possible.

WHALE SHARKS

Biology, Ecology, and Conservation

Alistair D. M. Dove and Simon J. Pierce

CRC Press

This year we continued our partnership with Atlanta

Brewing Company, Georgia's first craft brewery, in

creating special Georgia Aquarium-branded beers. 2020 saw the creation of Alligator IPA, Jellyfish

Berliner Weisse, Jellyfish Gose and Hammerhead

ATLANTA BREWING

PARTNERSHIP

Hoppy Lager.

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RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION

AQUARIUM PUBLICATIONS

Georgia Aquarium's Vice President of Science and Education, Dr. Al Dove, completed work on Whale Sharks: Biology, Ecology and Conservation. Due to be published in August 2021, this text will become the definitive resource on whale shark science. Additionally, the Research and Conservation team published multiple scientific papers this year.

GEORGIA'S ORIGINAL



GEORGIA AQUARIUM ALLIGATOR IPA BREWED WITH PINEAPPLE

KROGER BAG PARTNERSHIP

Since 2019, Kroger has released five Georgia Aquarium-themed reusable shopping bags. The most recent features hammerhead sharks to coincide with the launch of Sharks! Predators of the Deep. For every 20,000 bags released, three million plastic shopping bags are kept out of circulation and by extension, out of the ocean.



CLASS R RESEARCH LICENSE

In October, Georgia Aquarium became one of just three aquariums licensed as a Class R research facility under the Animal Welfare Act. This license is the highest standard of establishing ethical review of animal research for advanced scientific understanding.

Education EDutreach

t its core, Georgia Aquarium is an educational institution working to inspire the next generation of ocean advocates. As the first aquarium to be a Cognia Certified STEM Provider, we're committed to making aquatic education accessible for all. This past year, we saw the need for online learning sources and created a variety of free virtual tools for educators, students, and all guests to utilize so they could stay connected no matter where they were. EDUCATION & OUTREACH

SENSORY ROOM

Georgia Aquarium partnered with KultureCity to advance our ability to support and accommodate guests with sensory needs. In the fall, this entailed the design and construction of the Wilkins Rhodes sensory room. The space, located on the second floor outside the 4D Theater, is designed to create a safe and calming environment for guests that feel overwhelmed or overstimulated during their visit.

FIRST AQUARIUM TO RECEIVE STEM CERTIFICATION

Since opening in 2005, Georgia Aquarium has made providing a unique educational experience for both guests and students alike a priority. In 2020, these efforts were recognized as Georgia Aquarium became the first aquarium to earn the prestigious recognition of being named a Cognia Certified STEM Provider.



STEM Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics

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BABY BELUGA

May 17th, 2020: Adult beluga whale Whisper gave birth to Shila, a 174-pound, five-feet-fourinch beluga calf!

"This birth is important not only for Georgia Aquarium, but all accredited zoological facilities. Our hope is to sustain the beluga whale population in North America so future generations can learn about them."

-Eric Gaglione, Vice President of Zoological Operations at Georgia Aquarium.











GATOR CROSSING

GATOR

XING

2020 saw the triumphant return of American alligators to Georgia Aquarium. Their brand new habitat, Gator Crossing, provides glassbottomed views of the largest reptiles in North America.

PENGUIN CHICKS

The Mammals and Birds team was excited to report that 2020 saw the successful hatching and rearing of five African penguin chicks at the Aquarium.



FISH & CHIPS

Georgia Aquarium's 15th annual Fish and Chips golf tournament was held at Capital City Club's Crabapple Course in November 2020. A departure from our previous Brookhaven location, we were able to successfully host an enjoyable tournament with COVID-19 safety measures in place, including reduced players and reduced course amenities.

MILITARY SALUTE

Through our partnership with The Home Depot Foundation, we were able to continue our programming for U.S. Armed Forces in 2020. During the year we hosted a total of 27 veterans groups for the Veterans Immersion Program, and were able to provide free admission to military members on select Mondays throughout the year.







COLD-STUNNED TURTLES

In December, Georgia Aquarium was able to offer shelter to four cold-stunned loggerhead sea turtles. The turtles were flown in from New England to stay in the Aquarium's care until they were able to safely be returned to the ocean.







TRAVELING WITH GEORGIA AQUARIUM

Georgia Aquarium's Adventure Travel Program provides unique curated experiences for passionate aquatic advocates looking to deepen their involvement abroad with one of the world's largest aquariums. Our trips are centered around our remarkable animal collection and accompanied by a staff member from our Research & Conservation or Animal Care team—providing travelers with knowledge and expertise found nowhere else in the world. Proceeds from these trips go back to Georgia Aquarium's research and conservation initiatives.

In January 2020, our travelers were accompanied by Nathan Farnau, Georgia Aquarium's Associate Curator of Fishes and Invertebrates, as they took a luxury 10-day adventure cruise beginning in San Jose, Costa Rica and ending in Colón, Panama. Farnau's expertise on the diverse aquatic life of these varied ecosystems, as well as his passion for birding and nature photography made for a perfect addition to this unique itinerary. Guests traveled to exotic and well-preserved national parks, snorkeled and dived in beautiful coral reefs, hiked lush coastal jungle habitats, and even got to traverse the man-made marvel of the Panama Canal.

While the Coronavirus pandemic has halted international travel, we remain hopeful that Georgia Aquarium's adventure travel program will resume in the future—with rescheduled trips and new opportunities on the next horizon.



the states

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STRIPED BURRFISH

SCIENTIFIC NAME: Chilomycterus schoepfi CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern ANIMAL FACT: The striped burrfish is sometimes called a pufferfish – it can take in water and inflate its body into a large ball to deter predators. ARM

Thank You to Our Donors

Georgia Aquarium is a nonprofit committed to inspiring awareness and preservation of our ocean and aquatic animals worldwide. In order to continue these efforts, we need your help.

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These donations were received between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020. We have done our best to ensure correct listings; however, if your name is incorrect or omitted, please contact the Development department so we may correct our records. You can reach us at 404.581.4136 or development@georgiaaguarium.org.

acknowledges members of Georgia Aquarium's Anchor Society, a philanthropic membership.

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2020 BALANCE SHEET

ASSETS

Total Assets	
Plant, Property & Equipment net	
Receivables	
Prepaids	
Cash & Investments	

\$1,955,805 \$10,105,992 \$447,453,250 \$490,965,998

\$31,450,951

LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable & Accrued Expenses	
Deferred Revenue	
Debt & Other	
Total Liabilities	

NET ASSETS

With restrictions Without restrictions **Total Net Assets**

\$20,151,680 \$3,867,480 \$66,867,961 \$90,887,121

\$374,097,177 \$25,981,700 \$400,078,877

2020 STATEMENT

REVENUE

Total Revenue	\$52,099,140
Fundraising	\$3,951,910
Commissions & Events	\$4,605,68
Admissions & Memberships	\$43,541,55 ⁻

EXPENSES

Program Services	\$56,057,702
Support Services	\$24,869,091
Fundraising	\$160,479
Other Expenses	\$1,838,156
Total Expenses	\$82,925,428

Change in Net Assets

(\$30,826,282)

The statements shown above are condensed versions of our audited financial statements and do not include footnote disclosures. Complete audited financial

POISON DART FROG

SCIENTIFIC NAME: Dendrobates spp. **CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least Concern **ANIMAL FACT:** Poison dart frogs' toxicity varies depending on their diet.

HELP CREATE A SEA CHANGE

Georgia Aquarium is a nonprofit committed to inspiring awareness and preservation of our ocean and aquatic animals worldwide. In order to continue these efforts, we need your help.

Please support Georgia Aquarium

Together, we can create a **sea change** – in our ocean, and for the wondrous life that inhabits it.

You can support the work being done in our facility and in the field through a tax-deductible contribution to Georgia Aquarium. Your contributions are vital to the success of our mission.

We couldn't do this without you!

HARBOR SEAL

SCIENTIFIC NAME: Phoca vitulina CONSERVATION STATUS: Least Concern ANIMAL FACT: The harbor seal's whiskers help it detect prey in low light.



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