



Seattle Aquarium

# ANNUAL REPORT 2021



Photo by Kelli Lee, Seattle Aquarium





Photo by Sara Perry, Seattle Aquarium

## BELOVED AMBASSADOR

Rescued from an airport runway in Alaska as a pup, northern sea otter Adaa came to us in 2004. During his years here, he enthralled countless visitors and webcam viewers as he devoured his favorite crab, crunched ice, groomed and played.

Not only was Adaa the oldest male sea otter living at a U.S. zoo or aquarium—but he also became the oldest male sea otter on record in the Association of Zoos & Aquariums’ studbook when he reached the age of 20 years and 2 months, in late 2021.

A beloved ambassador, Adaa passed away from cancer in February 2022 at the age of 22 years and 8 months. We are forever grateful to him, and to all the animals in our care who advance our mission by sparking a desire to act on behalf of the marine environment.

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Dear friends,

What a difference a year makes! As we write this letter, your Seattle Aquarium is once again open to the public and operating at full capacity. We’re continuing to advance our conservation mission with an ever-increasing number of ambitious programs and initiatives. And we’re in active construction on our new, landmark building: the Ocean Pavilion.

Although 2021 continued to present us, and the world, with unpredictable challenges, it also provided reasons to feel hopeful and optimistic. It’s those feelings that inspired the theme of this year’s report, which frames the important work that your support enables through the lens of where it all begins: with the animals in our care. We believe that includes not only the animals that make their homes at the Seattle Aquarium—but also those that live in the ocean and on land, the whole world over.

We—human beings—are stewards of it all: the animals and their homes, the ocean and the planet. And together, as this report amply demonstrates, we can make a powerful difference through individual and collective action.

As Dr. Sylvia Earle famously said, “No blue, no green. No water, no life.” Thank you for joining us in our commitment to working toward, and taking action for, a healthy ocean and planet. We’re doing important, exciting things together—all in support of the Seattle Aquarium’s mission of *Inspiring Conservation of Our Marine Environment*.

With hope and gratitude,

*Robert W. Davidson*

*Melissa Mager*



**Robert W. Davidson**  
President & CEO  
Seattle Aquarium



**Melissa Mager**  
Chair, board of directors  
Seattle Aquarium

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

the Seattle Aquarium  
annual fund

Your gift of any size helps support the animals, programs and initiatives featured in this report—and so much more.

Get a glimpse of what your support makes possible and donate at [SeattleAquarium.org/donate](https://SeattleAquarium.org/donate).



# THE SEATTLE AQUARIUM SPECIES RECOVERY PROGRAM

Partnering to bring species back  
from near extinction

Can we protect endangered species when existing measures such as resource management and protected areas aren't enough to reverse the damage of human impacts?

With your help, the Aquarium is answering that question through our new species recovery program, in which we're partnering to restore endangered species locally and across the globe.

Indo-Pacific leopard sharks (*Stegostoma tigrinum*, also known as zebra sharks, hiu belimbing and other names) were once abundant in the Coral Triangle but hunted to near extinction. Now, with over 60 partners from more than 10 countries, we've helped launch a world-first effort to restore this species to its home waters.

Accredited aquariums will breed sharks already in human care, then transport the resulting eggs to hatcheries in Raja Ampat, Indonesia. Once hatched, the sharks will be reared, tagged and released.

In 2021, a recovery target of 500 adult sharks for the Raja Ampat population over the next 10 years was established through a workshop series with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Conservation Planning Specialist Group. A disease risk assessment, led by our Senior Veterinarian Dr. Caitlin Hadfield, was completed and revealed a low risk of disease spreading to the sharks that will be transported and the environments in which they will be released. And 10 Indonesian government entities signed a document of support for the project.



I had the privilege of snorkeling among these reefs and was overwhelmed by both their beauty and biological significance. If I can, in any way, support the restoration and healthy survival of any part of our natural world, let it be this place.

—Maurice Warner,  
Seattle Aquarium volunteer and  
species recovery program donor

## EXCITING PROGRESS

We're getting ever closer to the day that Indo-Pacific leopard shark eggs will start being transported to Indonesia for hatching.

As of March 2022, the first cohort of four aquarists was being trained at and by the Jakarta Aquarium and Safari, through generous funding provided by Conservation International. And hatchery construction was well underway, with expected completion later this spring. Our own Curator of Fish and Invertebrates Tim Carpenter collaborated on design of the life support systems and is slated to travel to Indonesia to inspect the hatcheries before the participating aquariums begin shipping shark eggs.

If all goes as planned, the first batch—or even batches!—of eggs will be shipped before the end of this year.

Once abundant in the Coral Triangle, Indo-Pacific leopard sharks have been hunted to near extinction. We're working with over 60 partners from more than 10 countries to help restore this species to its home waters.

Photo by Jake Wilton / Ocean Image Bank







## FOSTERING EMPATHY FOR MARINE WILDLIFE

Motivating conservation action through the charismatic power of animals

Every day, we see people entranced by our resident harbor seals and sea otters. Can we inspire the same level of care for animals without faces, like sea anemones and barnacles?

That's an aim of our multifaceted empathy work. Our staff and volunteers regularly use empathy framing to help visitors see all the animals at the Aquarium—from seals to sea stars—as unique individuals, worthy of care and conservation.

With your support, empathy-related advancements in 2021 included the launch of our first puppet show, *Catastrophe by the Sea*, based on the book of the same name. Our visitors can now enjoy the story of a lost cat who befriends an anemone, barnacles—faceless animals that nevertheless have voices and personalities—and other marine creatures as he roams the tide pools. Post-visit comments reveal that the show is a hit with children and adults alike.

The Aquarium's Empathy Fellowship program is designed to create a pathway into careers in aquariums, zoos and the conservation field for communities of color and other marginalized communities that bear the brunt of environmental harm and historically haven't reaped the benefits of the solutions proposed.

In July, our first cohort of empathy fellows—one of whom delivered a marine education program devoted to nudibranchs for LGBTQIA+ youth—transitioned to alumni status. Both fellows were hired for jobs in marine conservation within two months. One was hired by us, accepting a role as our volunteer engagement coordinator in early 2022.



I was grateful to work on something so needed in a difficult time, when many LGBTQIA+ young people have been isolated from one another. I'm eager to continue working in conservation, and certain of the urgent necessity of centering empathy and equity in this field.

—Jules Rader,  
2021 empathy fellow

## EMPATHY PLAY SPACE

As visitors continue to become more comfortable engaging with aquariums and museums—as they did before the pandemic—the Aquarium is inching closer to realizing its planned empathy-themed children's play space.

Themed around the care we provide to the animals at the Aquarium, the exhibit will allow children to play the roles of Aquarium biologists feeding and caring for animals. Practicing care is one of the ways children learn to consider the needs of others. It's an important step on the path to becoming more empathetic adults. If conditions allow, we hope to open the play space to our visitors in 2023.



# THE PINTO ABALONE RECOVERY PROJECT

Restoring an important, and critically endangered, native species

We're partnering to help restore an endangered shark species on the other side of the globe. Can we do the same for a native species here?

Our species recovery program took an exciting—and local—leap forward in 2021 with the full launch of the xwč'itqs recovery project. The only abalone species found in Washington state, pinto abalone (xwč'itqs in the Lushootseed language) are culturally important to Native American and Indigenous peoples. They're ecologically important too, with a key role in maintaining the health of kelp forest ecosystems, which are critical to the overall health of the Salish Sea.

Once abundant along the Washington coast, pinto abalone essentially disappeared from those waters due to recreational fishing, with a documented 97% decline between 1992 and 2017. They were state-listed as endangered in 2019.

With help from you, we're aiming to restore pinto abalone populations in Washington in partnership with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and others.

Each year, until a healthy, self-sustaining population of pinto abalone is reestablished in Washington, we'll receive cohorts of young pinto abalone, rear them for one to two years, then transport and release them into designated sites around the San Juans or Strait of Juan de Fuca.



I didn't even know that pinto abalone have a history in the Salish Sea and am beyond excited that there is hope for reestablishing this long-lived species in the giant kelp forests and rocky reef habitats to help keep algae at bay for the benefit of other critters.

—Seattle Aquarium donor  
Kim Wilmeth Miller

## NEXT STEPS

Later this spring, we'll collaborate with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund and Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife to release the first cohort of pinto abalone, received in the summer of 2021, at designated sites around the San Juan Islands or Strait of Juan de Fuca.

We'll receive the second cohort in the summer of 2022. And, just like the first, we'll rear and care for them until they're about an inch long, then transport and release them.

It takes between six and eight years for a pinto abalone to reach maturity and begin reproducing, at a size of between two and three inches. "We are committed to this until they don't need us anymore," says Director of Conservation Programs & Partnerships Erin Meyer, Ph.D.

The only abalone species found in Washington state, pinto abalone are important to ecosystem health—and critically endangered. We're partnering to reestablish a healthy, self-sustaining pinto abalone population in our local waters.







## ROCKFISH RESEARCH IN THE SALISH SEA

Understanding long-term  
population trends of iconic  
species of concern

Can we contribute to the knowledge needed to effectively manage ecosystems—and help our visitors understand why a particular and at-risk species is important?

Those are twin aims of our work with rockfish. All 24 rockfish species found in the Pacific Northwest are listed as species of concern in Washington; some are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. Effective management requires understanding how their populations are changing.

Since 2005, we've contributed to the knowledge base by conducting rocky reef surveys within Makah Nation waters at Neah Bay—operating under a formal agreement with the Nation to enter their land and waters for this work—and at numerous sites throughout Puget Sound.

One goal of the surveys is to document changes in diversity and density over time for rockfish, as well as a variety of other species. Our data have informed management of rockfish by the Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife and NOAA.

With support from donors like you, we completed our 17th year of this research in 2021: 29 dive surveys across 12 sites (including five in Neah Bay) documented over 1,000 fish across 14 species—mostly rockfish. We also happily observed a yelloweye rockfish that we've seen near the same boulder each year since 2015.

At the Aquarium, in addition to introducing visitors to the rockfish in our habitats, we celebrated the species with our second annual virtual event: Rockin' Rockfish Noon Year's Eve.



Rockfish fill many ecological niches—and our work helps inform ongoing management of a valuable natural resource.

It's an honor to dive in these beautiful locations and contribute to scientific knowledge about the baseline populations of these species of concern.

—Seattle Aquarium Curator of Fish & Invertebrates Tim Carpenter

## ENHANCED RESEARCH

A key challenge in conservation and coastal management is the inability to broadly, and safely, survey the seafloor. Divers can survey smaller areas in great detail, but understanding ecosystem health over large spatial scales requires more than divers alone can provide.

Enter our new ROV, purchased in 2021 and fondly named Waksa-s (“octopus” in Qwi-qwi-diččaq, the Makah language), which will allow us to explore underwater habitats, including those rarely surveyed.

Our first project is a pilot study to test and modify standardized survey protocols along Washington's outer coast. We aim to share those protocols with other researchers and, ultimately, contribute to the body of knowledge needed to manage kelp forests and other habitats.



# THE KELP FOREST ECOSYSTEM

Increasing awareness and inspiring action for a critical, life-sustaining habitat

Kelp is disappearing at an alarming rate in Puget Sound. Can we educate people about its importance and motivate them to make changes that will help restore kelp's abundance?

That's the goal of *The Kelp Highway*, the first in our three-part *Stories from the Salish Sea* video series, developed in 2021 with generous financial support from the James M. Lea Foundation. Hosted by conservationist and wildlife ecologist Chris Morgan, the video tells the story of kelp highways—interconnected ecosystems that provide critical habitat for thousands of species, including endangered salmon, orcas and pinto abalone (see pages 8–9). They also mitigate the effects of ocean acidification by sequestering carbon. We're supporting the video with an educational web page filled with actions that can make a positive difference for kelp.

With support from you, we also made strides in our work to help some of the endangered species that depend on kelp forests to survive. Our Cedar River Salmon Journey program had a record-breaking year in its 24th season, with 61 volunteers and 15 staff engaging with 9,569 visitors at five salmon-viewing locations along the river in October.

In support of our endangered local orcas, with your help we advocated for state funding for Quiet Sound, a program that will help reduce underwater noise and other impacts on the orcas from ships. Ocean Policy Manager Nora Nickum co-authored an op-ed in *The Seattle Times* on the program and also accepted a seat on its leadership committee.



Kelp forests and eelgrass beds are so magnificent and crucial—they don't get enough attention! They're key nurseries in the Salish Sea ecosystem and unfortunately, both are decreasing and we don't know exactly why yet. Can't wait for more information and a protection plan!

—Janice Sears,  
beach naturalist and  
Seattle Aquarium donor

## PROTECTING KELP

We're working to protect kelp at the state and federal levels in 2022 and beyond. At home, we advocated for a successful bill enabling the Department of Natural Resources to develop a collaborative plan to protect and restore at least 10,000 acres of kelp forests and eelgrass meadows by 2040.

In Washington, D.C., we're supporting the Keeping Ecosystems Living and Productive (KELP) Act in Congress, which would establish a grant program within NOAA for kelp forest conservation, restoration and management projects. These types of projects can help us better understand, and take, actions that support kelp forest recovery and sustainability. We're asking people to encourage their members of Congress to co-sponsor the bill.

Photo by Eiko Jones





# PROGRAM IMPACT

With your support, we made a real and positive difference in 2021—for the community, for the ocean and for the animals entrusted to our care. Thank you for helping us advance our mission of *Inspiring Conservation of Our Marine Environment*. Please enjoy the following highlights of what we were able to achieve with your help.

2021 was a record-breaking year for our Cedar River Salmon Journey program, with 61 volunteers and 15 staff sharing information and insights about salmon with 9,569 people at five sites along the river in October.

Photo by Jen Strongin





# INCREASING ACCESS AND ENGAGING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

## A virtual Aquarium visit for people with a disability or special need and their families

We transitioned our popular in-person DreamNight event to a digital experience in 2021, offering a free, fun-filled evening program showcasing animals, animal care staff, and a print-at-home craft. In addition to closed captions, the video featured interpretation in American Sign Language. Family views since the debut: 1,300.



Community Program Partner Coordinator Jasmine Williams leading the DreamNight craft project.



Animal Care Specialist Aubrey Theiss prepping food for harbor seals in a DreamNight highlight.

## “Meet us at the beach!”

In the 23rd year of our Beach Naturalist program, 138 volunteers and 22 staff held 36,633 conversations with visitors at 11 local beaches across 20 days in June, July and August. Sixteen volunteers and 10 staff had 1,277 conversations during an evening beach walk on December 3. Educational videos in English and Spanish were created to support the programming.



Photo by Jen Strongin

The chance to discover fascinating animals—like this sea lemon—during a winter low tide keeps people coming to our evening beach walks.

## Tribal and community partnerships for Salmon Homecoming School Days

Offered virtually over two days in 2021, the event featured welcome videos from the Muckleshoot and Suquamish Tribes, stories from Dakota storyteller Fern Naomi Renville, salmon Q&A with an Aquarium biologist, an interactive class, a diver show from the Window on Washington Waters habitat, and video segments from Seattle Public Utilities and Salmon Defense.



Storyteller Fern Naomi Renville (Dakota Tribe) at Salmon Homecoming School Days.

**430 ORGANIZATIONS**  
in our Connections program

**48,720 FREE TICKETS**  
to the Aquarium distributed

**183 \$25 MEMBERSHIP VOUCHERS**  
sold to individuals and families served by our Connections partners (a savings of nearly 90%)

**1 VIRTUAL TOUR**  
Available to Connections partners to engage their audiences in the Aquarium’s mission

**9,011 FREE ADMISSIONS**  
to the Aquarium through the Seattle and King County museum pass programs





# CONSERVATION EDUCATION AT THE AQUARIUM AND IN THE COMMUNITY

## Adapting our Community Science program for remote learning

In its 15th year, this program went all-digital, with high school students participating in online programs that encouraged shared inquiry and outlined the scientific method. Independent study and beach exploration were also components of the evolved program. In total, we hosted 87 online classes for over 300 students in 2021.



Over 300 students participated in the all-digital version of our Community Science Program in 2021.

## Education for volunteers—some of our most passionate advocates

To ensure our volunteers receive excellent training/enrichment opportunities, we rebuilt a hybrid training program and launched a learning series, *Tide Talks*. Throughout 2021, 583 volunteers donated 25,000+ hours of service—equal to 12 full-time paid staff, with a value of over \$713,000. We also onboarded/trained new volunteers: 76 adult, 65 youth.

### 2021 *Tide Talks* speakers:



WA Sea Grant Marine Ecologist  
Emily Grason



Microplastics Fellow  
Lyda Harris, Ph.D.



SR3 Executive Director  
Casey Mclean



Community Engagement &  
Inclusion Manager Darcie Larson

## Engaging with new audiences, students and lifelong learners online

We added 30 videos to our YouTube channel, including short-form videos, virtual events such as Lightning Talks and the Ocean Career Series, behind-the-scenes features, animal features, videos about supporting marine life and marine environments, and more—attracting 408,000 views and 36,000 hours watched.



### Ocean Career Series

This popular series helps the community learn about careers and career paths in marine and ocean sciences.

Our staff engaged with  
**559,441 VISITORS**

**PROVIDED 320 DAYS**  
of enhanced informal programming  
through partial funding from NOAA

Presented  
**476 DIVER PROGRAMS**  
and  
**200 INTERPRETIVE TALKS**

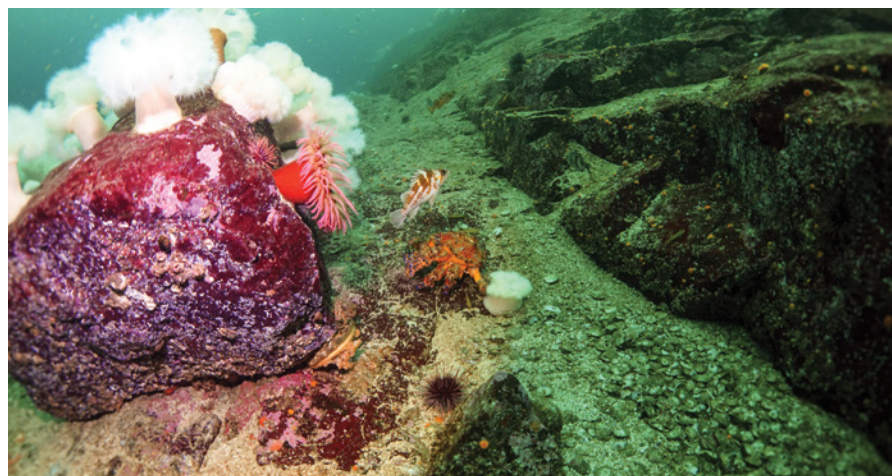
Led  
**32 PERSONALIZED TOURS**

Supported  
**42 THIRD-PARTY EVENING EVENTS**





# RAISING OUR VOICE FOR THE OCEAN



Seabed mining causes irreversible damage to marine ecosystems. We encouraged the community to let their state legislators know they wanted it banned in Washington state.

## Helping pass a law limiting single-use plastics

We worked with the Plastic-Free Washington Coalition to pass a new law mandating that single-use food accessory items (straws, cold beverage lids, utensils) be made available only on request; banning certain expanded polystyrene foam products; and requiring the use of recycled content in plastic bottles and trash bags. We hosted Gov. Inslee at the Seattle Aquarium for the signing of that bill.



Governor Inslee signed the groundbreaking new law, which will reduce plastic pollution and improve recycling, at the Seattle Aquarium.

## Partnering to pass legislation that improves ecosystem health in Washington

Ocean Policy Assistant Sarah Griffin and Ocean Policy Manager Nora Nickum testified in support of and worked with partners to pass S.B. 5145, prohibiting seabed mining leases for hard minerals—like gold, titanium and more—in Washington state waters, a process that would devastate fragile marine ecosystems.

## Bringing important voices to the table

Several Washington state representatives co-sponsored bills and joined Dear Colleague letters specifically at our request on topics including plastic pollution, coastal restoration funding, marine mammal protections and more. Our advocacy and relationship-building expertise were acknowledged when President & CEO Bob Davidson was invited to provide quotes in two Congressional press releases.

## Advising on a model ordinance to reduce plastic pollution/waste

Nora Nickum served on a task force advising the Bainbridge Island City Council on a new ordinance, which passed in November and includes a fee on disposable cups; a requirement for reusable food service ware for on-site dining and home compostable ware for to-go items; and a ban on single-use plastic packaging for personal care products at lodging establishments.



The Bainbridge Island ordinance will reduce plastic pollution and waste—and serve as a model for other jurisdictions.

## 2021 POLICY/ADVOCACY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**52 FEDERAL, 24 STATE**  
comment letters written and signed

**16 LETTERS**  
led by our Policy & Advocacy team

**1 PETITION LAUNCHED**

**2 IN-DEPTH POSITION PAPERS**  
completed on nuclear energy; and carbon capture, utilization and storage

**GAVE PUBLIC TESTIMONY 12 TIMES**  
during six state hearings, five federal public meetings and one high-level meeting with the Indonesian government

**7 EMAIL ACTION ALERTS SENT**



# FIELD CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH INITIATIVES

## Protecting sharks and rays

Director of Conservation Engagement & Learning Jim Wharton, Ph.D., continues his role on the steering committee for the AZA SAFE Sharks and Rays conservation initiative. A new three-year conservation action plan was completed and approved in late 2021. Work on the plan began immediately in 2022.



Jim Wharton, Ph.D.

## Sea otter conservation leadership

We convened experts from around the world as co-host of the first virtual Sea Otter Symposium since the event's inception in 1999, with 400+ attendees sharing sea otter conservation research. Curator of Conservation Research Shawn Larson, Ph.D., agreed to be the sea otter species lead for the IUCN Otter Specialist Group through 2025 and co-authored the updated IUCN red list status for sea otters.



Shawn Larson, Ph.D.



Blacktip reef shark



Bluespotted ray

## Working to save small cetaceans



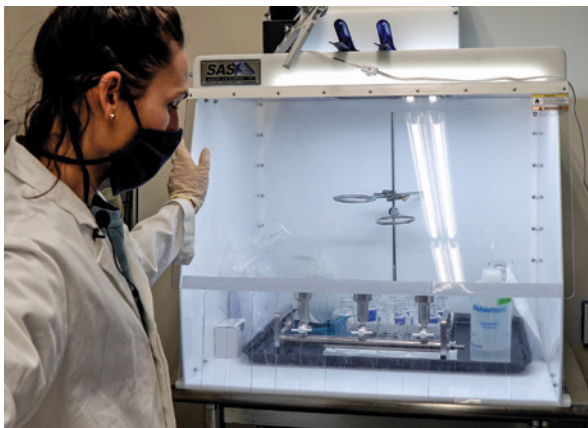
Grant Abel

Director of Life Sciences Grant Abel continued with the IUCN Species Survival Commission Cetacean Specialist Group as co-chair for conservation

planning with the Integrated Conservation Planning for Cetaceans team, formed in response to the situation facing critically endangered dolphin and porpoise species. Many of those species/populations are declining—for some, extinction is imminent without swift action.

## Advancing marine plastics research

Microplastics Research Fellow (2020–2021) Lyda Harris, Ph.D., led our first publication on microplastics in Elliott Bay. We continued to monitor local waters, expanded sampling efforts across the Salish Sea and hosted the second annual Pacific Northwest Microplastic Workshop series, with 50+ participants from 15 peer organizations discussing ongoing research.



Lyda Harris, Ph.D., processing microplastics research samples in the fume hood in the Aquarium's water quality lab.

**21<sup>ST</sup> YEAR**  
of sea otter conservation projects completed

**12<sup>TH</sup> YEAR**  
of sea otter foraging research completed

**18 DAYS**  
of sea otter conservation field research

**599 FORAGING DIVES—**  
sea otters going below the surface to look for food—documented across 10 sites

**300 SEA OTTERS**  
observed at Sandpoint in August, compared to 40 in 2020

**20% OF FEMALES**  
observed in September had newborn and/or near-weaned pups, suggesting reproductive rates near the maximum for the species





# EXPERTISE IN ANIMAL CARE, WELFARE AND REHABILITATION



Seattle Aquarium staff working to stabilize Shi Shi. From left: Veterinary Technician and Registrar Lindy McMorran, Senior Veterinarian Dr. Caitlin Hadfield, Aquarium Laboratory Specialist Angela Smith.

## December 2021: Welcome home, Sekiu the northern sea otter!

Sekiu (pronounced: SEE-cue) was born at the Seattle Aquarium in January 2012 and returned home after having spent the last four years at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium as a companion for their southern sea otters. She quickly resumed her relationship with her father, Adaa (see story, page 2), and former playmate, Mishka.



Happy reunion: Sekiu tumbling with Mishka.

## Working to save Shi Shi the green sea turtle

Found stranded with severe hypothermia on Shi Shi Beach by a Makah Tribal member in November, “Shi Shi” was brought to the Aquarium for intensive, 24-hour care for 13 days by our staff and staff from SR3. He was the 30<sup>th</sup> sea turtle the team has worked to rehabilitate since 1981. After a two-month fight to survive, he was unable to recover from extensive internal damage and humanely euthanized.



Sharing our coral propagation program with our guests helps draw more awareness to the importance of coral conservation.

## Coral nursery goes public

For years, we’ve grown our own corals to prevent them being removed from the wild and to share surplus corals with other zoos and aquariums, reducing the impact the aquarium industry once had on wild coral populations. The nursery, which had previously been out of public view, expanded to the Tropical Pacific habitat in 2021—sharing the propagation program with visitors and increasing awareness about the need to protect corals.

**12,000+**  
individual mammals, birds, fish and invertebrates entrusted to our care

**NEARLY 400**  
species in our care at the Seattle Aquarium

**26/36:**  
the average life span of a male Pacific harbor seal/the age of Barney, the elderly harbor seal in our care

**1979:**  
the year the Seattle Aquarium was first accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums

**24/365:**  
The hours per day/days per year that staff are at the Aquarium caring for our habitats and animals

Photo by Grant Abel, Seattle Aquarium



# YOUR INVALUABLE SUPPORT:

Making a difference now—and helping to build a better future

Support from our generous community helped ensure that we could continue advancing and delivering on our mission while navigating the significant and ongoing impacts of the pandemic. Thank you to the donors, at all levels, who stepped forward and supported the Seattle Aquarium in 2021.

### Total gifts: \$2,502,056

We're tremendously grateful to the individuals, foundations and corporations who gave generously in support of our mission and programs in 2021. And we're honored to share that the total number of donors grew from 1,848 supporters in 2020 to 2,012 supporters in 2021—an increase of nearly 9%.

### SeaChange: May 2021

The year's signature fundraising event was again held virtually, with keynote speaker and 2021 Seattle Aquarium Sylvia Earle Medalist Cristina Mittermeier inspiring the audience to give. Cristina shared that she loves how the Aquarium is community-building and "giving people an opportunity to be actors in the most important act of our planet: how we're going to save it."

The event raised over \$453,000—more than double any previous SeaChange event. Our deep gratitude to the 276 donors who contributed.

### GiveBIG and Giving Tuesday: May and November 2021

Aquarium supporters again showed their commitment during the year's two community giving days, generously giving a combined total of \$138,423.

### Year-end giving: November and December

Generous donors helped us move into 2022 on a strong and positive note, with \$890,351 in gifts.

Learn more at [SeattleAquarium.org/donate](https://SeattleAquarium.org/donate).

2021 Seattle Aquarium  
Sylvia Earle Medalist  
Cristina Mittermeier.



## One Ocean, One Future The Campaign for the Seattle Aquarium

The capital campaign for the Aquarium's new Ocean Pavilion made significant and positive progress in 2021. From the beginning of the campaign through December 31, 2021, 141 donors had given \$39,775,634. As of March 15, 2022, the campaign had surpassed the halfway point, with \$36,810,805 to raise in the next two years. Enjoy a fly-through video of the emerging centerpiece of the Seattle waterfront—the Ocean Pavilion—at [OneOceanOneFuture.org](https://OneOceanOneFuture.org).

Thank you to all who have given so generously in support of the Ocean Pavilion, and thank you to all who are considering joining us!

# 2021 SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Assets	(\$ in 000s)
Cash and investments	\$27,866
Receivables and prepaid expenses	6,664
Facility expansion project costs	26,092
Property, plant and equipment	1,970
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>\$62,592</b>

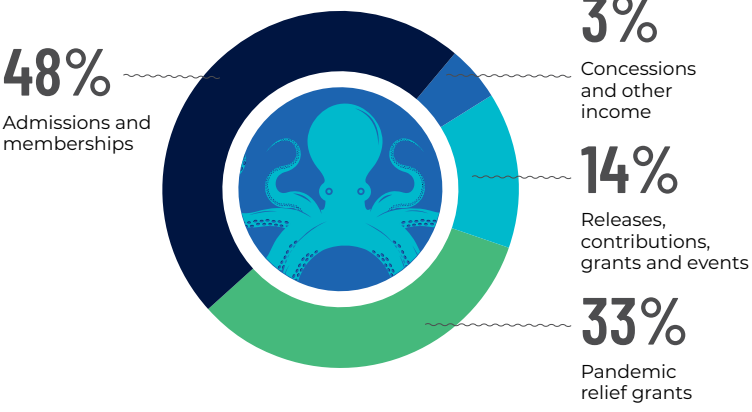
Liabilities and net assets	
Payables and other liabilities	\$6,773
Net assets without donor restrictions	
Undesignated	10,582
Reserve for expansion operating costs	5,000
Net assets with donor restrictions	40,237
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>\$55,819</b>
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b>\$62,592</b>

Revenues and expenses	
<b>Unrestricted revenue</b>	
Admissions and memberships	\$13,284
Concessions and other income	1,251
Contributions, grants, special events (net)	2,117
Pandemic relief grants	9,176
Restricted net assets released from restrictions	1,779
<b>Total unrestricted revenues</b>	<b>\$27,607</b>

Expenses	
Program expenses	\$13,700
Management and general	2,816
Fundraising	1,422
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$17,938</b>
<b>Change in unrestricted net assets</b>	<b>\$9,669</b>

Restricted activity	
Temporarily restricted revenue	\$14,451
Restricted net assets released from restrictions	(1,779)
<b>Change in restricted net assets</b>	<b>\$12,672</b>
<b>Total change in net assets</b>	<b>\$22,341</b>
<b>Net assets, beginning of year</b>	<b>\$33,478</b>
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	<b>\$55,819</b>

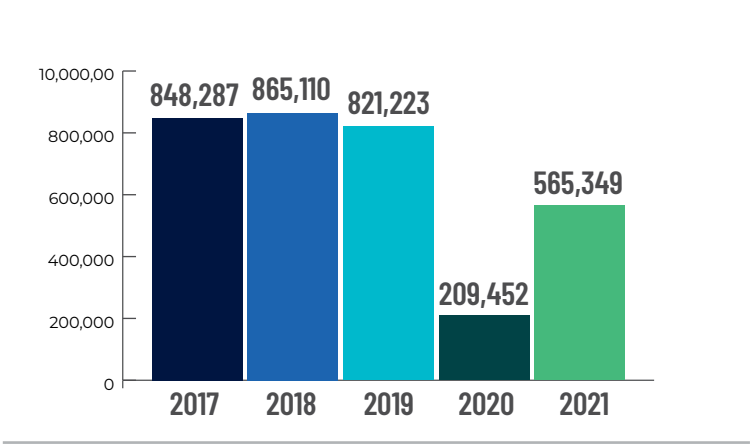
## Revenues



## Expenses



## Attendance



The statements shown above are condensed versions of our audited financial statements and do not include footnote disclosures. Complete audited financial statements are available on the Seattle Aquarium website.

Operating results in 2021 enabled the Aquarium to set aside funds to be spent on expansion operating costs between now and the opening of the Ocean Pavilion. Reserves have been increased to just under the Aquarium's goal of having six months of annual operating expenses on hand to protect against future pandemics or other unforeseen challenges.



# THE OCEAN PAVILION

Building Seattle's window to the world's waters

As Sylvia Earle said, "Every other breath we take comes from the ocean. Our fate and the ocean's are one."

Climate change threatens the existence of life on Earth. We at the Seattle Aquarium recognize that we have an obligation to act—to be part of the solution to the climate crisis. We have a vision to make ocean conservation a global imperative, a community value and a deeply held personal priority for all.

That vision takes shape through our campus expansion, beginning with the Ocean Pavilion. This new, landmark building will focus on ecosystems in the Coral Triangle, on the other side of the Pacific Ocean. Why? Because the threats facing the ocean are not local. They're global. The impacts felt in the Pacific Northwest are also felt across the ocean.

The Ocean Pavilion, the anchor point of Seattle's new waterfront, will not only connect our visitors with ecosystems they've never experienced before; it will also help them understand that Earth has just one ocean, which is in grave trouble. And together, we can act to restore it.

With your help, we made exciting progress on our expansion in 2021. We invite you to learn more at [OneOceanOneFuture.org](https://OneOceanOneFuture.org).

## A REGENERATIVE SEATTLE AQUARIUM

Our vision is to have a net-positive impact on ocean health. To produce more environmental benefits than harm. To stop the damage to our ocean and planet, and catalyze healing. To help ensure a climate-resilient, sustainable future for all: in other words, to become a regenerative aquarium.

To achieve that vision, we've crafted a regenerative plan that outlines our vision, goals and strategies to achieve them. View our plan summary at [SeattleAquarium.org/sustainability](https://SeattleAquarium.org/sustainability).

“

My wife Lisa and I, along with the Moccasin Lake Foundation, couldn't be more excited to participate in the campaign to regenerate two places we love: Seattle's waterfront and the ocean. Giving to the Ocean Pavilion doubles impact and creates a better city and world for future generations.

—Mike Anderson,  
Seattle Aquarium board member  
and *One Ocean, One Future*  
campaign donor



# THANK YOU

to our donors,  
members, community,  
volunteers and staff

Working together, we're making a difference every day for the health of the ocean and our blue planet—and building toward a future in which we'll be able to reach and engage with more people and communities than ever before. Thank you for your partnership, passion, support and commitment.

## 2021 donor recognition

We're deeply grateful to each of the donors who gave generously to us in 2021, listed by name in the digital version of this report. To request one, please call us at (206) 641-4684 or email [philanthropy@seattleaquarium.org](mailto:philanthropy@seattleaquarium.org).

## 2021 volunteer recognition

Despite restrictions related to the pandemic, our amazing team of dedicated volunteers continued to support the mission through interpretation, animal care, diving and much more. To view a list of these outstanding individuals by name, go to [SeattleAquarium.org/adult-volunteers](https://SeattleAquarium.org/adult-volunteers).



Beach naturalist Jen Strongin offering information and inspiration on a local shoreline.



Animal Care Specialist Mariko Bushcamp connecting with young guests—and Flaherty the northern fur seal.



**Make a difference:  
the Seattle Aquarium annual fund**

Your gift of any size helps support the animals,  
programs and initiatives featured in this report—  
and so much more.

Get a glimpse of what your support makes possible  
and donate at **[SeattleAquarium.org/donate](https://SeattleAquarium.org/donate)**



*Inspiring Conservation of Our Marine Environment*

The Seattle Aquarium is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Your donations make a difference! You can contribute by calling (206) 641-4684 or visiting [SeattleAquarium.org/donate](https://SeattleAquarium.org/donate). Contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law.