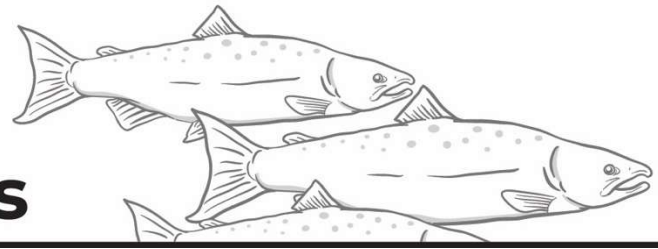


Planning a party for Aquarium animals



STANDARDS

Grade	Reading	Writing	Language	Math
Kindergarten	RL.K.1 RF.K.2.A RF.K.3.C	N/A	L.K.1.A L.K.1.D	(K.CC.B.5) (K.CC.C6)
1st grade	RF.1.3.F	W.1.2 W.1.8	L.1.1.A L.1.1.D L.1.5.A	N/A
2nd grade	RL.2.1 RL.2.3	W.2.2 W.2.8	N/A	(2.MD.A.1) (2.MD.A.3) (2.MD.A.4)

PURPOSE

At the Seattle Aquarium we believe one of the ways to inspire marine conservation is through fostering empathy for all marine life. What is empathy? Empathy is “a stimulated emotional state that relies on the ability to perceive, understand and care about the experiences or perspectives of another person or animal.” When building upon our empathy skills towards marine life, one of the goals is to see marine animals as individual beings who also have needs like us.

The purpose of this activity is to build upon each student’s empathy skills as they plan the “perfect birthday party” for one of the animals in the care of the Seattle Aquarium. During this lesson, students will learn about the animal’s birth or hatch story, where they live, and what they eat, as well as the ways animal birthdays are different than—or similar to—people birthdays.

TOPICS TO DISCUSS WITH STUDENTS

- All life is deserving of respect.
- There are many ways to celebrate birthdays. We can honor animals' birthdays to show that we are grateful they exist with us.
- Animals need different conditions than people to be happy and healthy. What is good for them won't always be good for us.
- What can you do if you don't understand a word you just read?

ACTIVITY DETAILS

The short writing activity is where students plan the perfect *birthday* party for one of the animals at the Seattle Aquarium. For animals that hatch from eggs, like salmon, the party celebrates their *hatchday*.

Each class will focus on one animal chosen by the teacher from the following: a sea otter, blue-spotted rays or salmon. The lesson plan includes activity worksheets. You also have the option to downscale or upscale the main activity. For example, you might add a very short second activity or an audiobook students can listen to.

Each activity helps students build their empathy skills first by learning about the marine animals and noting the differences and similarities between their lifestyles and ours, including:

- Are birthdays the same as hatchdays?
- In what environment or habitat does the animal live?
- What do they eat?
- What challenges do they face?

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Activity sheets and instructions for the animal your class will be celebrating (refer to the upscale/downscale section below for options)
- Pencils
- Animal birthday cards downloaded from our website
- (optional) To upscale or downscale this lesson, select an audiobook featuring your chosen animal, for example, [Baby Sea Otter](#); [Rosie Ray, A Tale of Watery Wings](#); or [Salmon Stream audiobook](#).
- (optional) Web images of your chosen animal to show students its appearance, habitat and diet
- (optional) For an upscale portion of this lesson, provide supplies of your choice for students to create art to hang from ceiling or make a colorful bulletin board

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Choose the animal your class will focus on. Your options are sea otters, blue-spotted rays or salmon. Prepare images and activity sheets, and provide links, if needed.

Please note: Not all students celebrate birthdays. You can adapt this lesson to your own students as needed.

Start a discussion with your students about birthdays. Before handing out activity sheets, ask some prompting questions:

- What is a birthday?
- How do you like to celebrate your birthday?
- Do you think only humans have birthdays?
- Why is it important to celebrate yourself?

We know what a birthday is but how is a “hatchday” different? Some animals lay eggs to hold their babies until the day they are ready to leave the egg. That’s the day they “hatch,” and it’s something to celebrate!

It’s not a birthday, it’s a _____ (Kids answer:
“Hatchday!”)

- Do you know any other animals that lay eggs? (Kids answer)

Ask your students what their favorite marine animal is and why. Then ask where the animal lives. (Kids answer)

Can you think of some ways the ocean is important to us? The ocean is very important to our favorite marine animals. It’s also important to us.

- Who likes to eat seafood? (Kids answer)
And where does seafood come from? The sea!
- The ocean also provides jobs for people in fishing .
- Let’s all take a deep breath...and let it out.
Did you know that tiny plants called plankton live in the ocean and add oxygen to the air we breathe, like trees do?

- Who likes to go to the beach?

(Kids answer)

The ocean gives us a great place to enjoy fun with family and friends. But the ocean isn't just for *us*. It's home to all your favorite marine animals. That's why it's important that we help keep their home clean. Without a clean ocean, your favorite animals and even people can get sick!

ANIMAL PROFILE PAGE: Sea otter

MEET YOUR ANIMAL

Ask the class, “Who has heard of a sea otter?” (Kids answer)

- What do you know about this animal?
- Are they big or small?
- What colors are they usually?
- Are they fluffy or smooth?
- Do they have fins or legs or paws?

Next, introduce the species and stories about sea otters.

INTRODUCING SEKIU, THE SEA OTTER

This is Sekiu (pronounced “SEE-CUE”), a very special sea otter. [Show a picture of Sekiu (can be found on our website)].

- What do you see? What do you notice about her? (Kids answer)

In the wild, sea otters live in oceans along the coast. They like to be around kelp, which is a plant that grows underwater. That’s where sea otters find lots of their favorite things to eat! Their strong teeth help them to eat sea urchins, crabs, squid, clams and fish. These clever animals sometimes use a rock as a tool to crack open clams and crabs.

Sea otters also live in cold ocean waters. They have lots of fur to keep them warm. They have up to 1 million hairs on a small part of their body! Sea otters have the thickest hair of any animal on Earth!

- How do humans stay warm? (Kids answer.)

One pup every year. Sea otter babies are called “pups.” Mother sea otters give birth to just one pup per year. She will fiercely protect them, teach them how to fish and how to survive in the ocean. Sometimes she’ll carry her pup on her stomach like this (show picture). In the wild, some sea otters hold paws while sleeping so they don’t drift away.

Keeping nature in balance and oceans healthy. If it weren't for sea otters, sea urchins might eat all the kelp! But sea otters eat enough sea urchins so there's plenty of kelp left for everyone—marine animals, fish and seabirds that depend on it. This is one way that sea otters help keep the ocean healthy!

Sekiu is a special sea otter because she was not born in the ocean. She was born at the Seattle Aquarium and still lives there! Her parents were named Aniak (AH-nee-ak) and Aada (ah-DAH).

- Who has been to the Aquarium before? Did you see Sekiu? (Kids answer)

Just like you, Sekiu has a birthday! Every year on January 14, the Seattle Aquarium celebrates her birthday because she is a sea otter that teaches us why sea otters are important to the ocean. Today you will be helping to plan her next birthday party! After you are done with this activity, you will have a chance to sign a birthday card for Sekiu.

LINK to Sekiu's 13th birthday party (2025):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6eHBYDIlUvQ>

ANIMAL PROFILE PAGE: Blue-spotted stingrays

MEET YOUR ANIMAL

Ask the class, “Who has heard of blue-spotted stingrays? (Kids answer)

- What do you know about this animal?
- Are they big or small?
- What colors are they?
- Are they fluffy or smooth?
- Do they have fins or legs or paws?

Next, introduce the species and stories about blue-spotted stingrays.

INTRODUCING FIESTA AND SIESTA, BLUE-SPOTTED STINGRAYS

These colorful rays are blue-spotted stingrays. [Show a picture of blue-spotted rays.]

Blue-spotted stingrays can be really long. Their top sides are dark green with blue spots but their undersides are white. This is called “countershading,” and it makes the rays harder to see from above or below. Orcas have this protective coloring, too.

In the wild, blue-spotted stingrays live in warm tropical waters in the Indo-Pacific area. Their habitat has lots of sand, coral and mangrove trees [show picture]. They like to swim in water that is not too deep where they find lots of food.

Hide and peek. To stay away from predators like hammerhead sharks, blue-spotted rays hide under the sand with just their eyes peeking out. The beautiful blue spots on their skin warn attackers to leave them alone or else get stung by the two deadly spines on the ray’s tail.

How do you think rays eat? (Kids offer some guesses) Blue-spotted stingrays press small sea animals into the sand, then move it to their mouth, which is on the underside of the rays’ body. Their mouth is a lot like ours with special

teeth that crush, crunch and chew shrimp, worms, small fish and other bite-sized marine animals.

Every year blue-spotted ray moms can give birth to about seven pups!

Their pups are born in a special way: they start as eggs and hatch *inside* the mother's belly. Then after a while they are born live. The mother ray will teach her pups how to hunt for food, hide in the sand from predators, and thrive in the wild ocean.

By taking care of themselves, blue-spotted rays also help care for other marine animals and the ocean.

Rays rely on small fish and shrimp of the coral reef to eat bacteria and old skin from their body. This helps the ray's spots stay clean and shiny, the cleaning creatures on the other hand get an easy meal. This relationship helps the ocean stay healthy.

FIESTA and SIESTA live at the Seattle Aquarium. They are different from wild blue-spotted rays because they were born under human care.

- Who has been to the Aquarium before? Did you see these rays?
(Kids answer)

Guess what? Just like humans, rays have siblings, too. These two are not twins but they are sisters!

Just like you, each one has a birthday. Fiesta was born in January 2022 and Siesta was born in April 2022. Every year, the Seattle Aquarium celebrates their birthdays because they are so good at taking care of the ocean and teaching us how we can do it, too. Today you will be helping to plan their birthday party! After you finish this activity, you will have a chance to sign their birthday cards!

ANIMAL PROFILE PAGE: Chinook salmon

MEET YOUR ANIMAL

Ask the class, “Who has heard of Chinook salmon?” (Kids answer)

- Did you know this salmon is also called a King salmon?
- What else do you know about this animal?
- Are they big or small?
- What colors are they usually?
- Are they fluffy or smooth?
- Do they have fins or legs or paws?

Next, introduce the species and stories about Chinook salmon.

INTRODUCING CHINOOK SALMON

([Show a picture of salmon](#)) These very important fish tell us about the health of their habitat. Is it clean? Do animals have enough food to eat? Is the kelp forest growing strong? Healthy salmon is good news for all, especially the southern resident orcas that love to eat the nutritious fish, just like we do.

Native tribes around the Seattle area, have a special bond with salmon that goes beyond food. It comes from thousands of years of living alongside one another around the waters.

In the wild, salmon can be different colors and sizes depending on their species. (show pictures) Five species of salmon live here in the Pacific Northwest—chum, sockeye, chinook or “king,” silver or “coho,” and pink. Chinook live the longest (about nine years) and can grow to nearly five feet long and more than 100 pounds! When salmon are ready to spawn or lay their eggs, they turn a bright red color.

Because they can live in both fresh water and salt water, salmon live in rivers and oceans all over the world! During spring, salmon eggs hatch along the edge of a river then migrate downstream to the ocean sometimes hundreds of miles away. Along the way, they eat little bugs and fish. Once in the ocean, they spend about four to six years in the salty sea growing, and eating for the long journey ahead.

Time to go back to the river. Every autumn, salmon parents swim upriver to lay as many as 5,000 eggs. (Whoa! That's a lot of eggs!) But less than 10 will survive to become adults, which makes protecting salmon habitats really important. After the eggs are laid, the mother salmon die, leaving behind nutrients in their bodies to enrich the water, soil and trees.

Every year, some native tribes invite the Seattle Aquarium to celebrate the return of the salmon and to celebrate the eggs that will hatch in the spring. Today you will be helping to plan their hatchday too! After you are done with this activity, you will have a chance to sign a hatchday card for the salmon that live at the Seattle Aquarium!

ACTIVITY SHEET INSTRUCTIONS

Hand out the appropriate activity sheet to each student and work with your students to resolve any questions. Use the following prompts to jumpstart thinking:

Reflect on the activity

- What is one thing you learned about _____ [insert class animal]
- Do they have a birthday like you? Or do they have a hatchday?
- What is a hatchday?
- What are some similarities between your birthday and their birthday/hatchday?
- What are some differences between your birthday and their birthday/hatchday?
- Do you think celebrating their birthdays/hatchday is a good idea for humans?
Why or why not?

Pass out birthday/hatchday cards!

Have kids write a message or draw a fun picture!

UPSCALING/DOWNSCALING (optional):

Activity	Upscale: In addition to the writing activity and the birthday card	Downscale: Omit writing activity and just do book + birthday card
Sekiu's activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen to Pup the Sea Otter Book• Answer book discussion questions• Page 4 in activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen to Pup the Sea Otter Book• Answer book discussion questions
Blue-spotted Stingrays activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen to Rosie Ray Book• Answer book discussion questions• Page 4 in activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen to Rosie Ray book• Answer book discussion questions
Salmon activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen to Salmon Stream book• Answer book discussion question<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Page 4 in activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen to Salmon Stream book• Answer book discussion questions

BOOK DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Pup the Sea Otter

- Where do sea otters live?
- What do sea otters eat?
- How do sea otters stay warm in the cold water?
- If mom sea otter is away, do you think baby sea otter feels safe?
- Why does the mom sea otter have to teach her baby sea otter to fish?
- When baby sea otter did not see his mom, how do you think he felt?
- Does anyone remember the animal that tried to catch the baby sea otter?
- How do you celebrate your birthday?
- If the sea otter had a birthday party, how do you think they would celebrate it?
- How do you think you can help protect sea otters?

Rosie the Spotted Eagle Ray

Her lifestyle is like blue-spotted rays.

- Where do Rosie and blue-spotted stingrays live?
- What are some examples of food that they eat?
- When Rosie and blue-spotted rays feel in danger, how do they protect themselves?
- How do they move in the ocean?
- Where did they shove their snouts earlier in the book?
- When Rosie saw the hammerhead shark, how do you think she felt?
- If you were Rosie or a blue-spotted ray, would it be easy to live in the ocean?
- How do you celebrate your birthday?
- If a blue-spotted ray had a birthday, how do you think they would celebrate it?
- What are some ways we can help blue-spotted rays or other rays like Rosie?

Salmon Stream

- Where are the two locations where salmon live?
- What do salmon eat?
- How do you know a salmon is a fish? What are some characteristics?

- What kind of animals like to eat salmon?
- Do salmon lay eggs? Where do they lay their eggs?
- If the rivers get warm over time, how would the salmon feel?
- Salmon can sense their way back to the rivers where they were born. Would you like to have that power?
- How can you help salmon in the ocean?
- Humans have birthdays, but if salmon celebrated their hatchdays, how would they celebrate it?