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## **WAIKIKI AQUARIUM FOSTERS PROMOTES STEWARDSHIP OF HAWAII'S UNDERWATER WORLD THROUGH RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION**

HONOLULU – Since becoming the first marine field station in Hawai'i in 1912 and a part of the University of Hawaii in 1919, the Waikiki Aquarium has been fostering awareness and promoting stewardship of the aquatic life of Hawai'i and the tropical Pacific through research and conservation. The 105-year-old facility boasts several ongoing research projects that have been designed to restore, protect and manage native Hawaiian species as well as other threatened or endangered species.

The Waikiki Aquarium's research and conservation efforts focus on five key areas, including:

### **Propagation**

Much of the Aquarium's research revolves around the propagation of marine animals, including the Hawaiian seahorse (*Hippocampus* sp.), giant clams (*Tridacnids*), masked angelfish (*Genicanthus personatus*) and endemic yellow goby (*Priolepis*). The Waikiki Aquarium was also the first facility in the world to successfully propagate the Chambered Nautilus after constructing special temperature-controlled tanks simulating the Nautilus' natural habitats. Through breeding programs, the Waikiki Aquarium is able to reduce its dependence on collecting specimens from the wild, which further strengthens its conservation mission.

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## **Cephalopod Biology**

While the Waikiki Aquarium was the first aquarium in the world to propagate the Chambered Nautilus in 1985, it continues to focus its research efforts on the cephalopods in an effort to unlock the secrets of this “living fossil.” The Aquarium currently features two species of nautilus—the flashback cuttle and the flamboyant cuttle, the latter of which is exhibited nowhere else in the United States.

## **Shark & Ray Research**

The Waikiki Aquarium’s shark research program focuses on the distribution, diet and reproductive biology of Hawaiian sharks as well as the husbandry and biology of sharks and rays in aquariums. Among the Aquarium’s current research projects are an investigation of shark finning in Hawaiian waters, a study of the reproductive biology of the tiger shark in Hawaiian waters and research on goiter development and thyroid gland diseases in captive sharks.

## **Monk Seal Research**

With fewer than 1,400 animals remaining in the wild, Hawaiian monk seals are one of the most threatened marine mammals in the world. Hoping to play an important role in the recovery of this species, the Waikiki Aquarium’s current research projects focus on the physiology and thermoregulation of the Aquarium’s two resident monk seals.

## **Coral Research**

Making up one of the most diverse and important habitats on the planets, coral reefs are currently under assault from an array of environmental stresses and human impacts. Research at the Waikiki Aquarium is helping to uncover the secrets of coral biology in order to shed light on these imperiled environments. The Waikiki Aquarium has maintained cultures of living corals since 1978 and now has the oldest and largest collection of living corals in the United States.

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The Waikiki Aquarium has received several awards for its research and conservation efforts, including the Munson Aquatic Conservation Exhibit (M.A.C.E.) Award for its "South Pacific Marine Communities" exhibit and the Edward H. Beach Award for its "Long Term Tropical Pacific Coral Propagation Program." In 2006, the Aquarium's pioneering research was also showcased to a nationwide audience as part of the PBS special, "Window to the Sea," which went behind-the-scenes at four leading aquariums nationwide to reveal the science, natural history and complex beauty of the undersea world.

**About the Waikiki Aquarium**

Founded in 1904 and administered by the University of Hawaii since 1919, the Waikiki Aquarium is located on the shoreline of Waikiki Beach next to a living reef and across from Kapiolani Park. The Aquarium – third oldest in the U.S. – showcases more than 500 marine species, and maintains more than 3,000 marine specimens. Public exhibits, education programs and research focus on the unique aquatic life of Hawaii and the tropical Pacific. The Aquarium welcomes more than 320,000 visitors annually, and is open daily from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. except Honolulu Marathon Sunday and Christmas Day. Admission is \$9 for visitors; \$6 for local residents, active duty military with ID, students with ID and seniors; \$4 for youths ages 13-17 and persons with disabilities; \$2 for juniors ages 5 to 12; and free for children 4 and under and Friends of Waikiki Aquarium (FOWA) members. For more information about the Waikiki Aquarium, including membership, please call 808-923-9741 or visit [www.waquarium.org](http://www.waquarium.org).

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