



Audubon Aquarium  
of the Americas  
*A Facility of Audubon Nature Institute*

Audubon Aquarium of the Americas  
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## It's All Smiles at Audubon Aquarium! Trio of Cownose Ray Pups Born in Stingray Touchpool

(New Orleans, La.) - In late January, Audubon Aquarium welcomed three new additions! A trio of female cownose ray pups were born in the Stingray Touchpool located in the Reef Rescue Gallery at the Aquarium.

"We had not seen any breeding behavior but the two female rays seemed to have gained a bit of weight in late 2017," said Beth Firchau, Audubon Aquarium's Director of Husbandry.

In December, the Aquarium's veterinarian confirmed both pregnancies - and that one mother was about to deliver a pair of pups - via ultrasound. These were first-time pregnancies for both mothers.

"This news was very unexpected because these rays usually only produce one pup at a time," said Firchau. "Staff were very excited!"

The mother carrying two pups gave birth on January 19. The second pup was significantly smaller than her sister. Because of her smaller size, she needed supportive care, including tube feeding, in the first few weeks after she was born.

Firchau added, "We are happy to report she has grown a great deal since birth and is doing great! She is now almost the same size as her sister. Animals feeling safe and comfortable are more likely to engage in reproduction, so our touchpool rays reproducing and the pups doing so well is a great sign we are doing really good work."

The third birth from a different mother followed on January 27.

In 2017, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) identified cownose rays as an official collaborative breeding program and this year, will establish a studbook for the rays in AZA facilities. Studbooks document the pedigree and entire demographic history of each animal within a managed population among AZA member institutions.

Currently all three pups are behind the scenes. Once they get a bit older, animal care staff will share these adorable additions with the Aquarium's guests in the Great Maya Reef.

### COWNOSE FUN FACTS

- The gestation period in cownose rays is believed to be 10 to 12 months.
- The pups are born live and are independent at birth.
- They are born with a little barb at the base of the tail, immediately ready to forage for their own food.

- Coastal habitat are crucial to the reproductive success of cownose rays. Pups are born in coastal habitats and spend the first few months of their lives learning to forage on bivalves and fish in these habitats.

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Audubon Nature Institute operates a family of museums, parks and research facilities dedicated to celebrating the wonders of nature. Through innovative live animal exhibits, education programs, and scientific discovery, Audubon makes a meaningful contribution to preserving wildlife for the future. Audubon Nature Institute flagships include Audubon Park, Audubon Zoo, Audubon Aquarium of the Americas, Entergy Giant Screen Theater, Audubon Butterfly Garden and Insectarium, Audubon Louisiana Nature Center, Freeport-McMoRan Audubon Species Survival Center, Woldenberg Riverfront Park and Audubon Wilderness Park. Ron Forman is President and CEO of Audubon Nature Institute.

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