



Audubon Aquarium
of the Americas
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Audubon Aquarium of the Americas
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New Shark and Ray Touchpool Gallery Coming to Audubon Aquarium of the Americas

Exhibit Set to Open on Aquarium's Second Floor in 2019

(New Orleans, La.) – In celebration of Shark Week, Audubon Aquarium of the Americas announces an exciting new addition on the second floor, where an interactive exhibit – a Shark and Ray Touchpool Gallery – is set to make its debut next year.

Construction will begin in August and the exhibit is scheduled to open in summer 2019. The contractor for the \$2.9 million project is C M Combs Construction of Madisonville, La.

The new exhibit will occupy a larger space than the existing Stingray Touchpool Gallery and will accommodate several different species, including a variety of small sharks and rays, some of which have not been part of the Aquarium collection for some time.

The familiar cownose rays in the Stingray Touchpool that have delighted visitors for years will remain.

The existing 5-foot-by-10-foot pool located on the downriver end of the Aquarium near the “Reef Rescue” virtual reality attraction will be open throughout the estimated 10-month construction process.

“Our new Shark and Ray Touchpool gallery will give guests a chance to learn about the importance of sharks to the ocean environment,” said Rich Toth, Vice President and Managing Director of Audubon Aquarium.

“We hope this new exhibit encourages an appreciation for this often-misunderstood but essential species by highlighting sharks’ considerable contributions to the health of our planet. Sharks have far more to fear from humans than we do from them.”

Toth said he has always been intrigued by all marine life – especially sharks and stingrays.

“I think we find them fascinating because some sharks and rays are feared for their predatory and defensive behaviors. For us to tear down that fear and help our guests to understand and appreciate these animals is important to the conversation.”

The new, kidney-shaped pool will measure approximately 60 feet long by 16 feet at its widest point, narrowing to about 9 feet in the middle. The gallery will be between the Aquarium’s penguin and sea otter exhibits across from the seahorse display.

Guests will have the opportunity to interact with small sharks and rays under the watchful eyes of the Aquarium’s curatorial and education staff and see daily training and educational programming. A high-tech underwater camera will offer visitors a peek at images from below the surface on a nearby giant screen.

Other species being considered for the new gallery include zebra shark, catshark, bamboo shark, southern ray, Atlantic ray, yellow ray, blue-spotted ray and guitarfish.

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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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