



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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FINtastic Shark Week Announcement at Audubon Aquarium of the Americas**

*Reach Into the Ocean at the New Shark Discovery Opening October 5*

(New Orleans, La.) - In celebration of Shark Week, Audubon Aquarium of the Americas announces the opening of the new shark and ray touchpool named “Shark Discovery” on October 5, with a sneak peek for guests at the Aquarium's annual fundraiser, [Scales and Ales](#), on October 4.

The \$2.9 million habitat spans much of the Aquarium's second floor and is the largest project at the Aquarium since the 2014 opening of the Great Maya Reef. The gallery is located between the penguin and sea otter habitats, across from the seahorse display.

The new 13,000-gallon pool measures approximately 60-feet-long by 16-feet at its widest point – six times the size of the current ray touchpool at the Aquarium. A massive interactive LED screen running the entire length of the pool will offer interactive educational programming to teach guests about the animals in the pool and their important roles in their ecosystems.

“The habitat will be home to a number of shark and ray species,” says Vice President and Managing Director of Audubon Aquarium of the Americas Rich Toth. “This latest experience will give guests the opportunity to interact with marine life and connect to the ocean.”

The touchpool will include zebra shark, coral catshark, white spotted bamboo shark, epaulette shark, southern stingray, Atlantic guitarfish, bullnose ray, blue-spotted stingray, and cownose stingray.

Sharks play a vital role in top-down maintenance of ocean ecosystems around the world. Globally, shark and ray species are threatened with extinction largely due to overfishing and other unsustainable human practices. As a member of the Association of Zoos and Aquarium (AZA), Audubon Aquarium has partnered with fellow member organizations to help Save Animals From Extinction (SAFE). [AZA SAFE](#) provides a new approach for collaborative conservation — the AZA SAFE Conservation Action Plan includes specific projects, goals, and actions to address the needs of each species, including sharks and rays.

“By fostering a connection to marine life through hands-on interaction with sharks, we hope to encourage an appreciation for the often misunderstood, but essential, species,” says Toth. “We want to help guests realize that sharks have far more to fear from humans than we do from them. We want them to help us save them from extinction.”

**Shark and Ray Facts:**

- Sharks and rays are usually very wary of people and will swim away long before you see them
- Sharks and rays do not have true bones, they have cartilage instead
- Cownose rays are named for their distinctly creased head lobes that resemble the nose of a cow
- Sharks inhabit all the world's oceans, and some can even be found in freshwater rivers and lakes
- The greatest threat to sharks is HUMANS. Each year, tens of millions of sharks are killed for their fins