

2023

ANNUAL REVIEW



Monterey Bay
Aquarium



“Your generous support gives us the confidence to plan boldly so that we can make a difference for our ocean planet.” — EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JULIE PACKARD

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Front cover: Green sea turtle, *Chelonia mydas*

This page: Yellowfin tuna, *Thunnus albacares*, swim among Pacific sardines, *Sardinops sagax*, in the Open Sea exhibit.

Thank you!

I'm excited to report that 2023 was a year of great progress in our mission to inspire conservation of the ocean. I hope you enjoy reading about the impact you helped make and feel proud of all that you helped us accomplish. You've provided unprecedented support to make all this possible. Last year, we made big strides toward our \$300 million multi-year campaign goal, with \$112 million raised in the first two years.

I want to acknowledge and thank Stephen Neal for serving as Board Chair over the past decade, and to welcome Tegan Acton, who will now lead our board into the future. Tegan is a founder and co-chair of Wildcard Giving, a family of philanthropic entities dedicated to furthering civic values, collective responsibility, and our common humanity. She and the rest of the Aquarium board are charting a steady course forward.

Our newest exhibition, *Into the Deep/En lo Profundo*, continues to delight visitors as we introduce people to the hidden mysteries of the deep sea. Our scientists are constantly learning more about the animals and ecosystems of this vast region and we'll continue to share what we learn with our visitors.

It's time to reimagine our Splash Zone galleries targeted especially at our youngest visitors. We're in the process of creating a new early learners exhibit area, including an expanded African penguins habitat, scheduled to open in 2026.

We've been in urgent need of new space to support our team's work to raise and release stranded young sea otters. I'm excited to report we're building a new facility for this important program. Our long-term leadership in sea otter conservation is a critical element of recovering this threatened species in California. We've so far received a total of \$4 million from the State of California and the Crankstart Foundation to get this project underway.

We've become a leading global voice in the campaign to reduce plastic pollution at the source and won significant policy victories in California that tackle the crisis of single-use plastic. Seafood Watch and our global



conservation program, which turn 25 this year, are moving supply chains worldwide in a more sustainable direction and changing the lives of the people who depend on the sea for their food and livelihoods.

There really is nothing more important we can be doing than to provide much needed mentorship and support for our young people. To that end, we brought back our pre-school Head Start programs, reimaged our middle school summer program, and awarded our first two Shultz Scholarships. All these education programs are oriented toward serving young people from communities that have historically been underrepresented in conservation programs and career pathways. The college scholarship program was launched by a number of generous donors and we'll be looking to expand this effort over the next few months.

What has made our work possible over nearly 40 years — and allows us to dream big about what we can accomplish together in the future — is you. Your generous support underpins all of our achievements. You give us the resources and confidence to plan boldly so that we can continue to make a difference for our ocean planet.

For that, I am truly grateful.

Julie Packard
Executive Director



Left photo: Tegan Acton (Chair) **Right photo:** (Front row left to right), Michael Mantell, Louise Stephens, Stephen Neal, Julie Packard (Vice Chair), Chris Scholin, Tegan Acton (Chair); (Back row left to right), Mark Wan, Susan Orr, Lisa D. White, Mike Gupta, Martha Martinez, Caroline Getty, Eric Jensen; **Not pictured:** Gideon Yu, M.R.C. Greenwood, Greg Silverman

The Monterey Bay Aquarium is one of the best aquariums in the world and a global leader in ocean conservation, thanks to the generous support of our donors and the hard work of our remarkable leadership team, dedicated staff, and passionate volunteers over our first four decades.

I'm honored to have had the opportunity to serve on the Aquarium board with outgoing Chair Stephen Neal for the past six years, and now to be entrusted with succeeding him. I look forward to building on the strong foundation of governance established by Steve and his predecessors, David Packard and Peter Bing.

The Aquarium has made such great progress in the past 12 months and we have tremendous opportunities to do even more in the next several years. Our success in advancing policy victories for the ocean is rooted in the deep connection we've forged with millions of guests. Those experiences with our exhibits, programs, and each staff member and volunteer they interact with, have established a bond of trust — and a commitment to do more to protect and restore the ocean.

I'm particularly excited about our plans to create a new early learners exhibit that builds on what Splash Zone

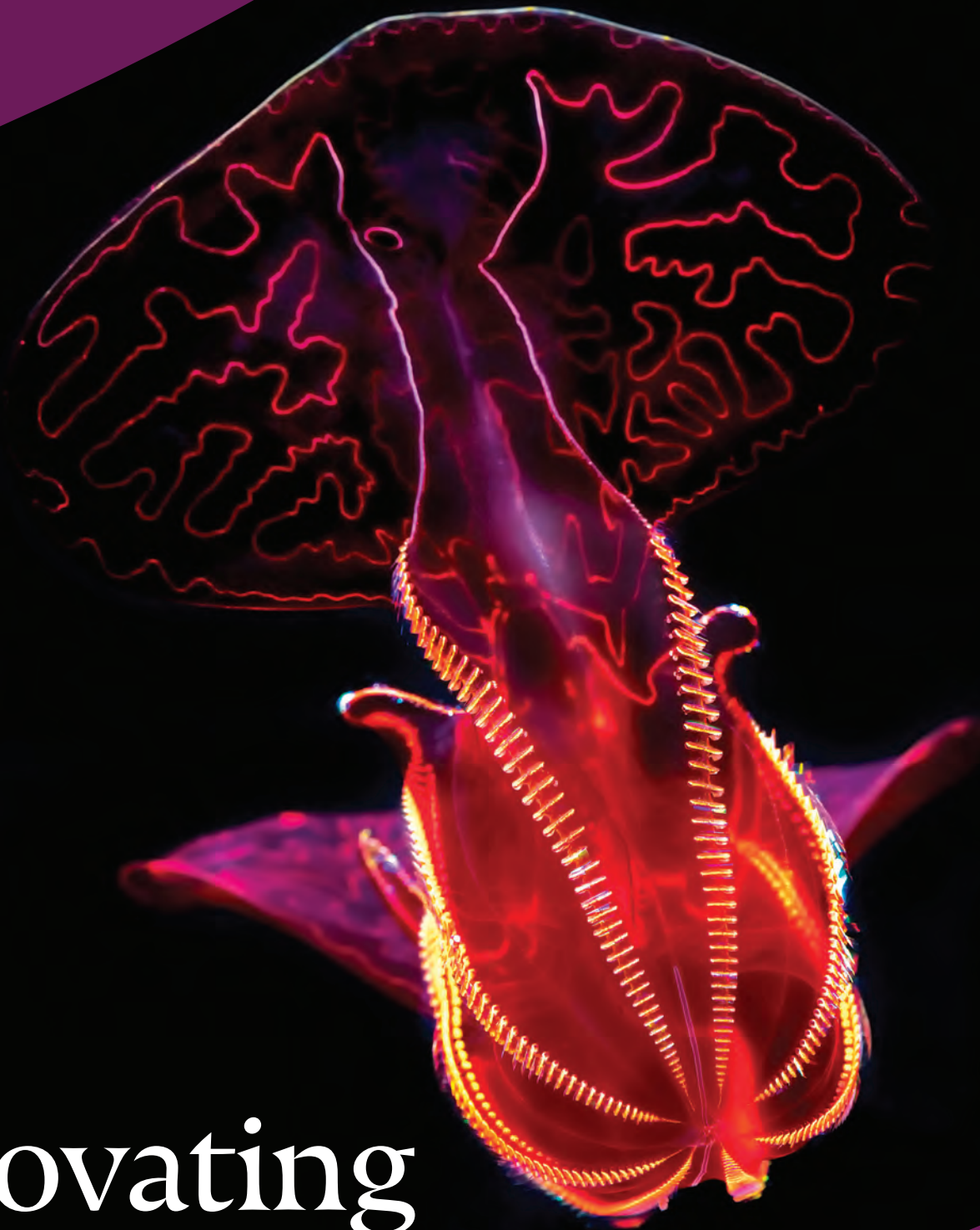
pioneered more than two decades ago. We've learned so much since then about how to touch the hearts of our youngest visitors so that they develop real empathy for ocean life. Fostering that feeling of caring and connection is absolutely essential as we work to build a world where people and nature flourish together.

I see those same connections growing out of the impressive programs our Education team is creating with the support that came from many of you to help us build the Bechtel Education Center. I can't wait to see what happens as new generations of young people gain critical skills and perspectives through these programs and begin to make their mark.

As has always been the case, the Aquarium will aim high. With your support, we will continue to accomplish great things. From all of us on the Board of Trustees, thank you.

Tegan Acton
Board Chair

Innovating for the ocean



Animal care innovations include our first-ever success in raising deep-sea bloody-belly comb jellies, *Lampocteis cruentiventer*.

As we near our 40th anniversary, we're working to ensure our exhibits, programs, and facilities continue to evoke awe and wonder in our visitors, inspiring them to take action for the ocean. We displayed new jelly and bird species, launched an auditorium program on bioluminescence, and welcomed a second veterinarian to our team. We celebrated deep-sea research and innovation at our fifth David Packard Award event, this year honoring philanthropist and ocean leader Wendy Schmidt.

New animals for Into the Deep

Breakthroughs in raising and exhibiting deep-sea jellies ensured that *Into the Deep/En lo Profundo* continued to fascinate and educate guests with its unique exploration of the largest living space on Earth.

We introduced never-before-seen species like purple-lipped jellies and tower jellies, plus gelatinous midwater species such as common siphonophores, barrel amphipods, and sea angels.

We continue working to culture deep-sea comb jellies and we applied what we've learned so far and became the first to culture and exhibit bloody-belly comb jellies, another mesmerizing midwater species.

We're also likely the first ever to exhibit the elegant dinner-plate jelly, which we collected in Monterey Bay from about a half mile down while working with our research and technology partners at MBARI (Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute).

A new companion auditorium program to *Into the Deep* went live in 2023. *Living Light: Bioluminescence* showcases the mysteriously beautiful ability of some deep-sea organisms to create their own light. Guests who were awed by the bioluminescence room in the exhibit can now glow on and experience more of the brilliant displays on the big screen.

The program was filmed and produced by our Film & Video team, which worked with the Dive Safety team to



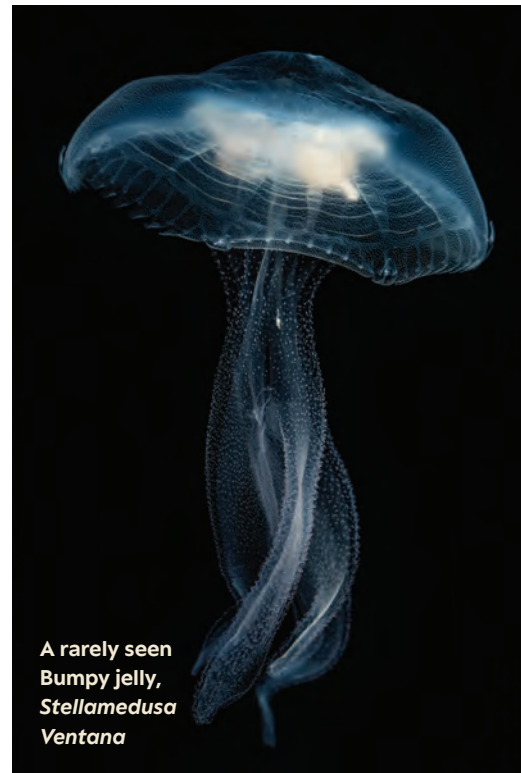
We've exhibited sea angels, *Clione sp.*, a predatory swimming snail from the deep sea.

capture underwater footage in locations from Bocas Del Toro, Panama, to Kona, Hawaii, as well as here in Monterey Bay.

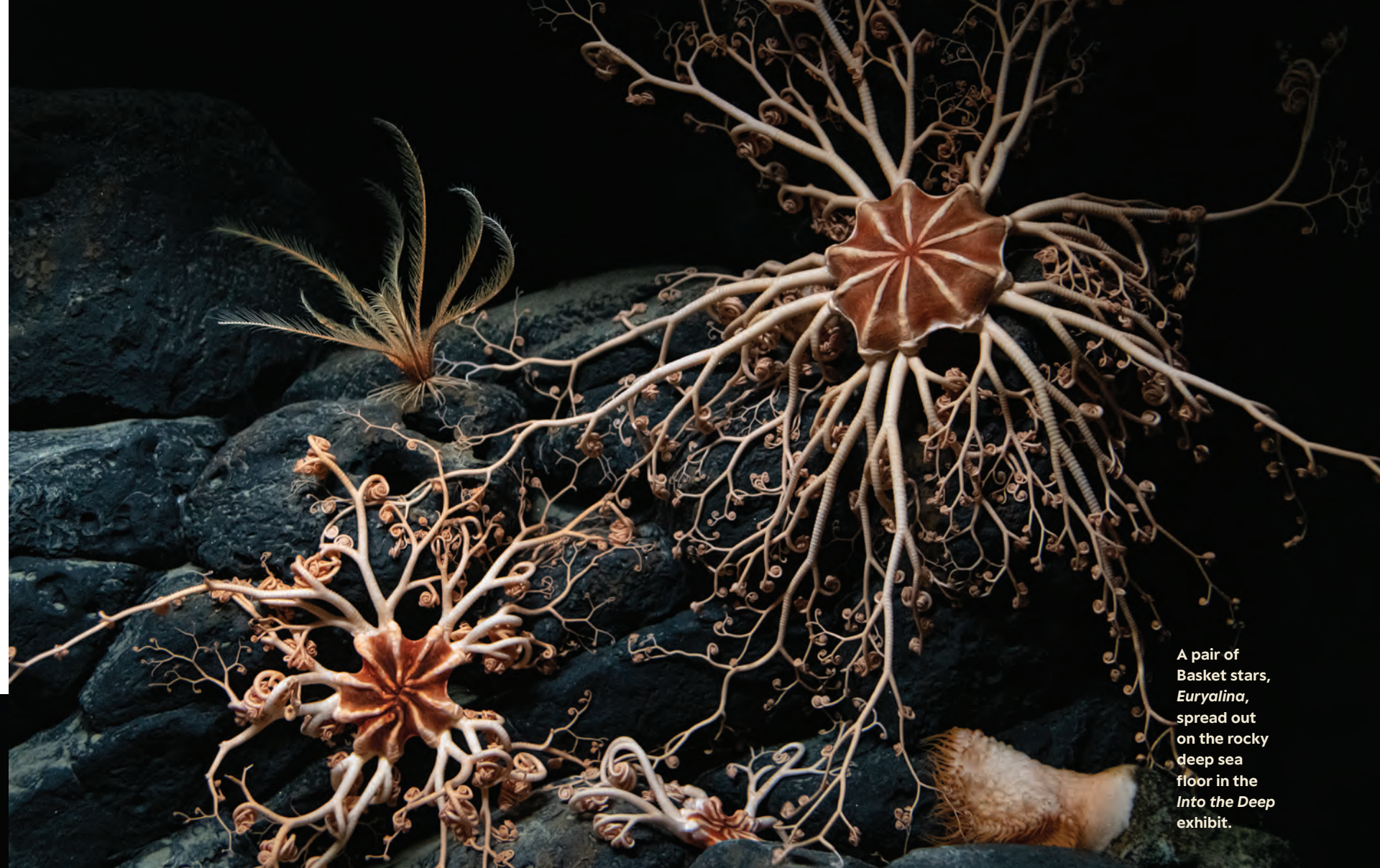
Visitor surveys showed that guests took away key messages from *Into the Deep* and experienced new feelings of empathy and compassion for deep-sea life, even months later. While many guests were already knowledgeable about plastic pollution, many also reported taking action after visiting the exhibition, especially to reduce their use of plastics.

"I saw a video of a trash bag floating around in the most remote reaches of the planet. I didn't like that, so I cut down on trash," said one guest. "It's important not just for fish but also the Earth as a whole."

We're proud that the Association of Zoos and Aquariums honored *Into the Deep* with its Exhibit Innovation Award for 2023, which recognizes excellence in live animal display and exhibit design.



A rarely seen Bumpy jelly, *Stellamedusa Ventana*

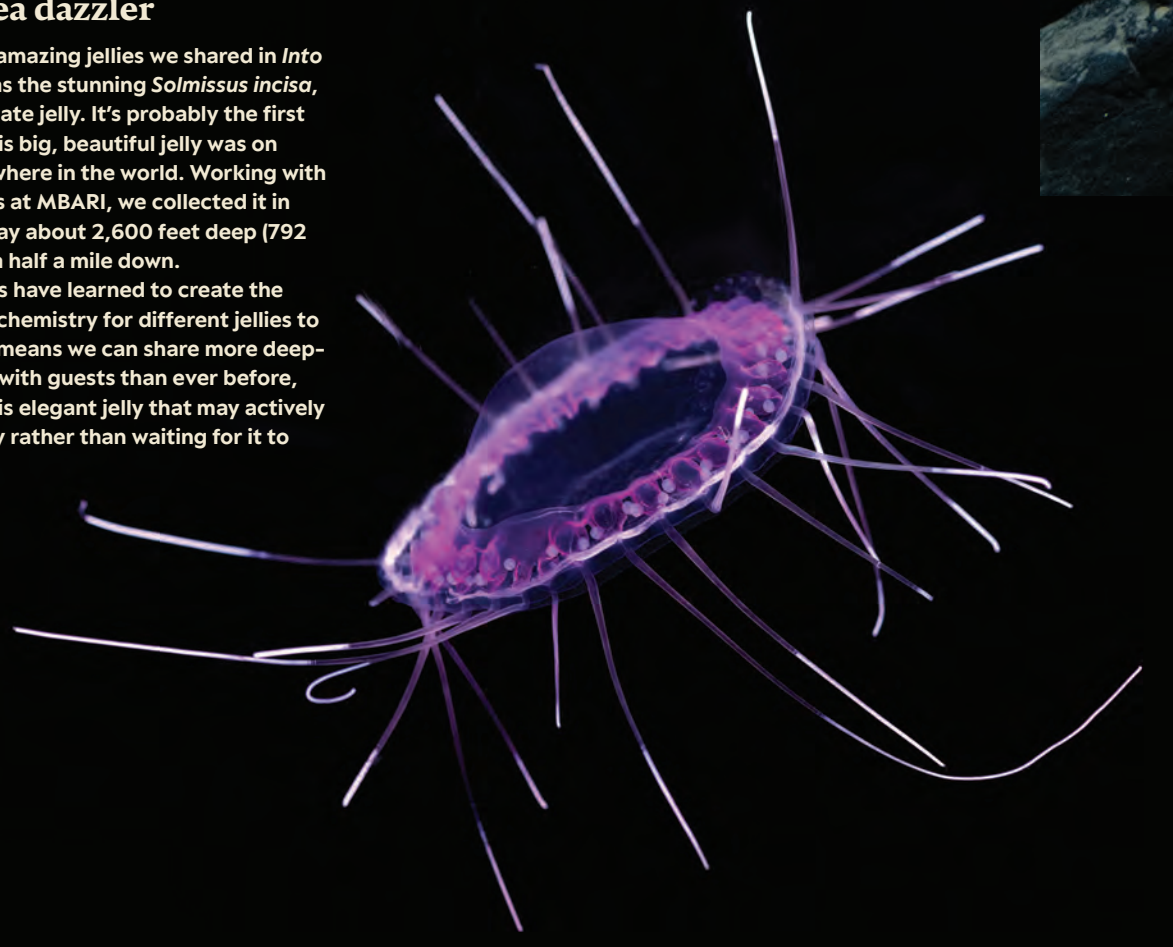


A pair of Basket stars, *Euryalina*, spread out on the rocky deep sea floor in the *Into the Deep* exhibit.

Deep-sea dazzler

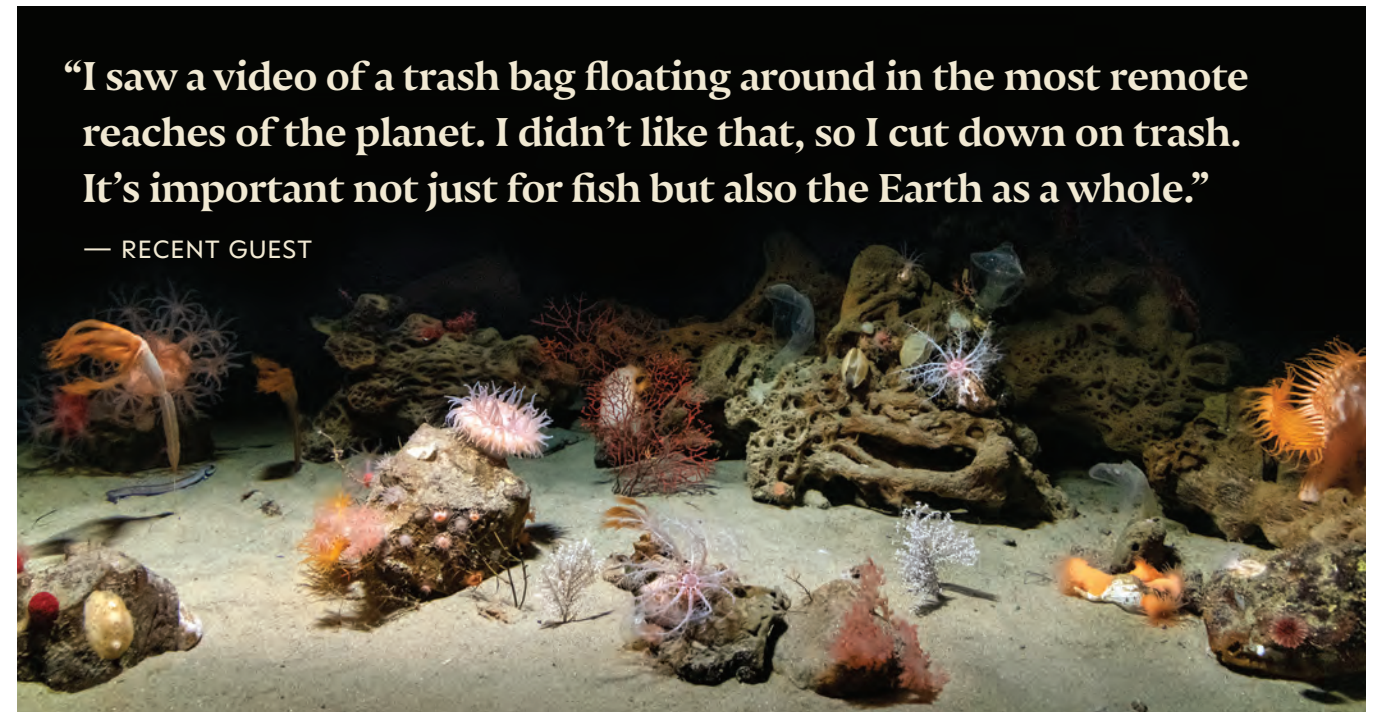
Among the amazing jellies we shared in *Into the Deep* was the stunning *Solmissus incisa*, or dinner-plate jelly. It's probably the first time that this big, beautiful jelly was on exhibit anywhere in the world. Working with our partners at MBARI, we collected it in Monterey Bay about 2,600 feet deep (792 meters) — a half a mile down.

Our teams have learned to create the ideal water chemistry for different jellies to thrive. This means we can share more deep-sea species with guests than ever before, including this elegant jelly that may actively hunt its prey rather than waiting for it to drift by.



"I saw a video of a trash bag floating around in the most remote reaches of the planet. I didn't like that, so I cut down on trash. It's important not just for fish but also the Earth as a whole."

— RECENT GUEST



Building for the future

Besides our dedication to healthy animals and sparkling exhibits, we work hard behind the scenes, up in the rafters, down in the basement, and miles offshore to maintain the infrastructure critical to our operations.

After all, most of our buildings and related support systems are nearly 40 years old, and we need to assure

they're sturdy and secure for many years to come. We have a number of projects in the works that we'll complete in the coming years. In 2023 we upgraded our gas-powered HVAC chillers to more efficient ones that run on electricity. We also increased the capacity of our exotics treatment system that treats seawater leaving exhibits with fine filtration and high doses of UV light, preventing potentially invasive species from entering Monterey Bay. And we reconfigured two of the exhibits in *Into the Deep* to allow for greater temperature flexibility, so we can accommodate animals from various depths and locations.



Creating a new facility for sea otter rehabilitation

We broke ground on a new behind-the-scenes holding facility for our sea otter conservation program. When completed later this year, the two new holding tanks and two ICU troughs will replace those we can no longer use at Hopkins Marine Station.

The Aquarium is the lead for surrogacy, rehabilitation, and release of wild southern sea otters — including stranded pups. The new facility will play a critical role in managing the wild sea otters we care for each year.



Water Science Lab

We reopened our Water Science Lab — which assures water quality throughout our exhibits — after an extensive and much-needed update. The lab is part of our "All About the Animals" behind-the-scenes tour that members and other guests can book.

SEAWATER PIPELINE PROJECT NEARS COMPLETION

A massive multi-year project to update the original supports for our 40-year-old seawater intake pipelines is scheduled to be completed in 2024. The new structures will allow us to continue to pump life-sustaining seawater into our exhibits for decades to come.

The original concrete structures that kept the two, 900-foot-long pipes in place have deteriorated after decades of water motion, seawater corrosion, and general aging.

The stronger but smaller new supports are made of a stainless steel alloy that resists corrosion. They are also spaced farther apart than the ones they replace, so we'll leave a smaller footprint on the floor of Monterey Bay.

Most of the work must be done underwater, in places nearly 60 feet deep, requiring many permits and abundant people power. In conjunction with the construction, we're also doing three debris collection dives each year.

Stats as of December 2023 (construction season two of three):

585+ LBS.
DEBRIS
RECOVERED

4
VESSELS
including one custom
work barge

1
WHITE SHARK
spotted in the
project area



39
CONSTRUCTION
CREW
including three
marine mammal monitors
and nine wildlife
team divers

16
POST-AND-BEAM
SUPPORTS
installed

450+
CONSTRUCTION
DIVES

368
DAYS
of underwater
construction

700+
SPECIES
noted living around
the pipeline

Expanding animal care

Exceptional animal care is at the heart of all we do. We work hard to welcome new resident animals and keep all the animals who live at the Aquarium healthy and thriving.

In 2023, we added nine shorebirds and seabirds to our living collection: two puffins, two murres, three red knots, and a snowy plover. A penguin chick hatched here as well, and we named her after Gerry Low-Sabado, an educator, community preservationist, and dedicated friend of the Aquarium.

Part of our expert care involves training. The sea otter team has helped other animal caretakers design training programs with techniques for working with sea turtles, sharks, giant sea bass, and other fishes, including moray

eels. We use positive training and enrichment activities to collaborate with our animals on their health care and enhance their lives on exhibit. Enrichments help promote natural behaviors, while training is geared toward a particular goal, like getting an animal to step onto a scale.

In addition to our multiple-times-per-day routine of animal and life support rounds and evaluations, we also perform formal health and welfare assessments — a proactive way to measure animal well-being over time. In 2023 we conducted nearly 1,000 assessments, each involving multiple people, data, and levels of oversight.

For several years we've logged animal records via a managed digital database called Tracks — a huge improvement over the past practice of handwritten notes. Every day we enter hundreds of points of data, including feeding and health records, acquisitions, research data, and permit applications.



Animal Care staff use crate training for common murres, *Uria aalge*, in the Seabirds exhibit. This practical enrichment helps the animals and assists staff as they conduct regular health exams.



Clockwise from top: Dr. Mike Murray examines a newly hatched African penguin chick, *Spheniscus demersus*; staff member holds Gerry, our newest hatchling; and a red knot, *Calidris canutus*, on exhibit in the Aviary.



Welcome to our new vet!

We expanded our veterinary care staff in July when we welcomed Dr. Ri Chang as our second staff veterinarian. They were previously a veterinary extern here in 2021 and made a strong impression with their experience in aquatic animal medicine.

The UC Davis-educated Dr. Ri was part of the Aquatic Animal Health Laboratory at the prestigious veterinary school. They focused on sea otter and fish microbiology and pathology, research they've shared at International Association of Aquatic Animal Medicine conferences. They also trained in and performed stranded elasmobranch pathology and are continuing this work at the Aquarium.

Dr. Ri is our first scuba-certified vet, and also brings to us cutting-edge knowledge of next-generation technologies, especially advanced imaging techniques such as ultrasound, computed tomography, and molecular sequencing.

“From isopods and pricklebacks to albatrosses and otters, I’m looking forward to continuing getting to know all the creatures of the Aquarium — both in and out of the water.” — DR. RI CHANG

The value of volunteers

The Aquarium continues to enjoy the commitment and passion of over 1,000 volunteers. They inspire conservation of the ocean, both in front of and behind the scenes. In addition to our highly visible volunteer guides, who share stories with our guests in ways that generate empathy and love for our animals and for the remarkable habitat that

is the Monterey Bay, these dedicated individuals care for animals, prepare exhibits, support finance operations, and track sea otters in the wild. These are just a few of the activities where they contribute their joy and expertise.

At our annual milestone celebration, we honored more than 200 of our volunteers who have achieved 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, and even 35 years of service to the Aquarium. Like all the individuals in our exceptional volunteer community, their presence and steadfast support have ensured the Monterey Bay Aquarium continues to win hearts and promote ocean conservation, one guest at a time.

VOLUNTEERS BY THE NUMBERS

126,419

Total hours of service in 2023

56
Volunteer duties

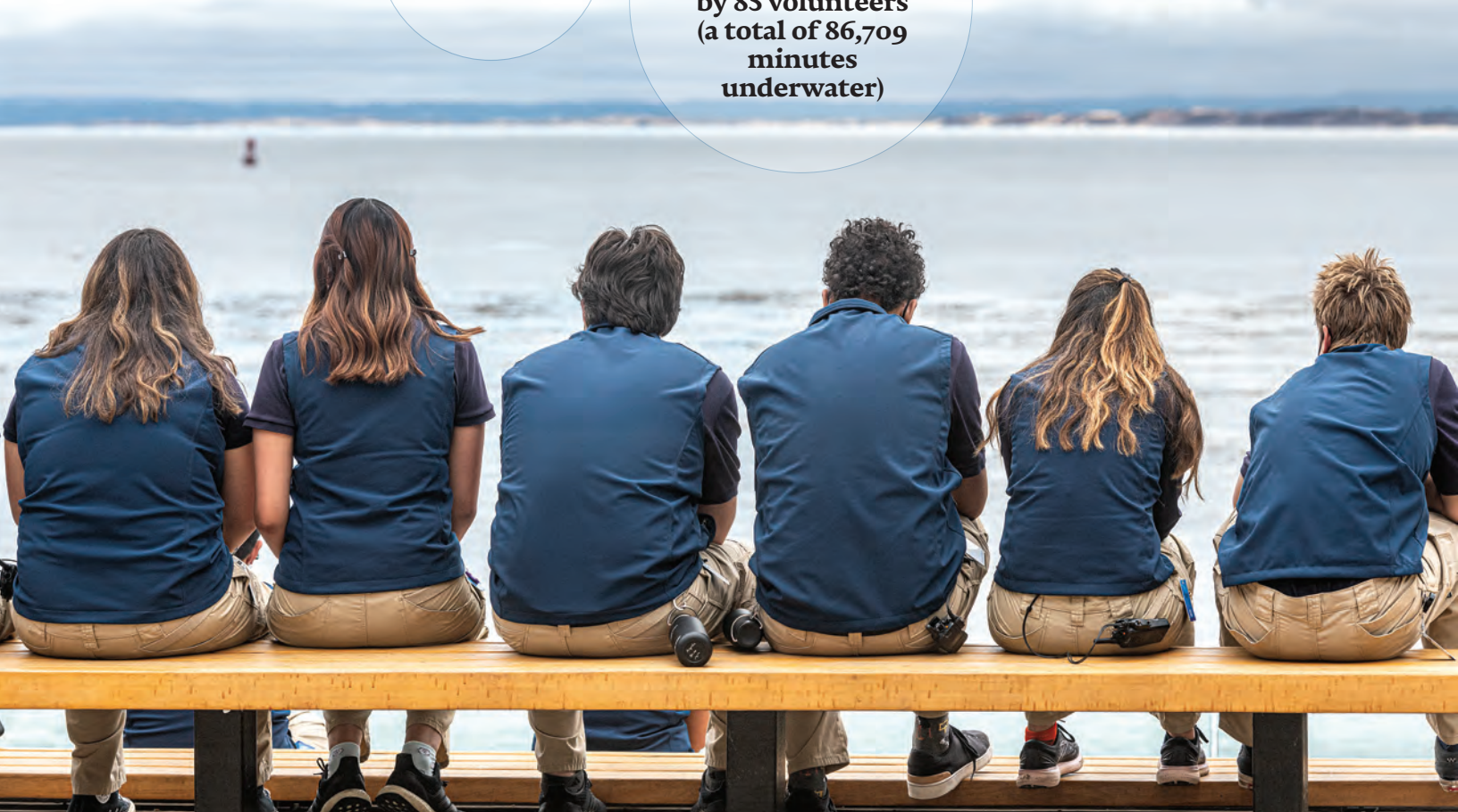
73
Teens contributed 4,188 hours

91
Age of our oldest volunteer

1,097
Individual volunteers

1,966
Dives completed by 85 volunteers (a total of 86,709 minutes underwater)

15
Age of our youngest volunteer



Clockwise from left: Volunteers young and old connect with guests and work behind the scenes; our Milestones dinner recognized 200 volunteers for their years of service; Julie Packard celebrated Ellen Burton for her 35 years as an Aquarium volunteer.

Recognizing an ocean innovator

On November 1, we celebrated our fifth David Packard Award Dinner at the Rosewood Sand Hill. We established the event in 2014 to honor leaders whose scope and achievements embody the qualities of thought and action that David Packard held dear, and who have worked effectively to make the future of our planet more sustainable.

This year, we honored Wendy Schmidt, president and co-founder of the Schmidt Ocean Institute. Wendy was selected in recognition of her nearly two decades of philanthropic support for clean air, renewable energy, resilient food systems, a healthy ocean, and human rights for all. Wendy and her husband Eric apply their resources to advance scientific discovery and to support commu-

nities and practices that are working to restore balance between people and planet.

The special evening also launched our 40th anniversary year, including a short video about our impact over the past decades. The program featured remarks from 2023 Dinner Chair Larry Sonsini, Julie Packard, Board Chair Tegan Acton, and honoree Wendy Schmidt. In her remarks, Wendy described the Aquarium's important role in educating people about the marine world. "The ocean is most of the planet and contains most of the life on it. That is what we put at risk, when we don't understand. The biggest threat to the ocean is our ignorance," she told attendees.

We were joined in celebration by so many new and long-time friends, 235 guests in total. Thanks to the generosity of the dinner co-chairs and many other donors, the event raised nearly \$5 million to support our conservation and education initiatives.



Board Chair Tegan Acton introduced Wendy Schmidt and lauded her impressive contributions that are creating positive change in the world.

DINNER CHAIR

Larry Sonsini

CO-CHAIRS \$100,000

Anonymous
Tegan and Brian Acton
Jimi and Ned Barnholt
Jennifer Caldwell and John H. N. Fisher
Denise Foderaro and Frank Quattrone
Caron and Alan Lacy
Jeanne and Bill Landreth
Sally Lucas
Audra and Sean McNicholas
Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation
Becky and Jim Morgan
Susan and Lynn Orr
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
Julie Packard
The Priem Family Foundation
Louise and Sarah Stephens

CONTRIBUTORS \$25,000 AND ABOVE

Anonymous
Bloomberg Philanthropies
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Gates Ventures
Andrea and John Hennessy
Cathie and Pitch Johnson
Teresa B. McCann and Eric C. Jensen
Pisces Foundation
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\$2,500 AND ABOVE

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Susan Acquistapace
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Don Burgett
Fran Codispoti and Margaux Schroeder
Shari Conrad
Mark Delos Reyes Davis
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Joanne and Art Hall
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Hohbach Family Foundation
Cynthia K. Larive
Maxine and Michael Mantell
Tracy and Gene Sykes
TOSA Foundation
Kira Whitehouse and Solomon Endlich
Judd Williams
Jeanne and Cyril Yansouni

IN-KIND DONORS

Lucia Vineyards
Lucy Wines
Storrs Winery and Vineyards



“The ocean is most of the planet and contains most of the life on it. That is what we put at risk, when we don’t understand. The biggest threat to the ocean is our ignorance.”

— WENDY SCHMIDT

[WATCH OUR 40TH ANNIVERSARY VIDEO HERE](#)



Nurturing future ocean stewards

Connecting children to the ocean and its animals, like these sea nettles, *Chrysaora fuscescens*, at a young age fosters a lifelong appreciation and love for its wonders.

Throughout 2023 our education team worked to restore our many programs for teens, educators, and schoolchildren so we can fulfill the full potential of the Bechtel Family Center for Ocean Education and Leadership. From preschool through high school and beyond, our programs build empathy, teach about the wonders of the ocean, and build participants' confidence to act.

Splash Zone Head Start program restarted

Each year, over 1,000 preschool children, along with their families and teachers, visit the Aquarium for a bilingual (Spanish and English) and bicultural education program in partnership with Head Start Centers across Monterey and Santa Cruz counties. Students begin their ocean learning journey as they touch hermit crabs in our touch pools, wave at swimming penguins, and play with caring adults in our content-rich exhibits.

For over two decades, the Splash Zone Head Start collaboration has taught students to care for the natural world, building empathy from an early age. It was wonderful to welcome these young students back to the Aquarium for in-person sessions in 2023.

Our Aquarium educators visit Head Start Centers to introduce students to the ocean themes, animals, and habitats they'll encounter when they arrive at the Aquarium. We hold family workshops and collaborate with Head Start teachers, working with our communities to teach ocean conservation in more authentic and meaningful ways. Splash Zone Head Start is one of our longest-running education programs, offered free of charge, thanks to the generosity of our members and donors.



Students making memories on field trips

Since 1985, we've welcomed over 2.7 million schoolchildren to the Aquarium for free field trips. These trips are a critical part of our mission to inspire conservation of the ocean and make ocean conservation learning accessible to all members of our community. After restarting our in-person education programs in 2022, we've been building back toward our pre-pandemic field trip numbers. In the 2022-23 school year, 26,567 schoolchildren participated in field trips and hands-on Discovery Lab programs. We're excited to continue to welcome more students to the Aquarium in the coming months.

Senior bilingual education specialist Kristy Markowitz says of the program, "I am constantly moved by the 'awe' moments I get to witness. For many of these students and their families, this is their first Aquarium visit. I know it is something that many of them will cherish forever."

LAUNCHING A NEW YOUTH PROGRAM:

Ocean Learning Adventures

We offered a brand-new education program for middle school students, Ocean Learning Adventures. Our teen programs are a core part of our mission to inspire conservation of the ocean. When students have meaningful experiences with the ocean, they develop care and concern for marine life that can become part of their identity.

Ocean Learning Adventures is a weeklong camp that encourages girls, boys, and gender-diverse youth to connect to the natural world around them. Teens kayak in Elkhorn Slough and learn about the watershed; they spend time at our Kelp Forest exhibit learning about the interconnected web of life in this ecosystem; they surface scuba dive in our Great Tide Pool with our Underwater Explorers program.

Teens also participate in engineering challenges in our Bechtel Family Center for Ocean Education and Leadership. Students learn basic engineering skills and concepts while incorporating ocean conservation into their projects. For example, after watching our auditorium show on bioluminescence, students make use of circuit-building materials in the Bechtel Innovation Lab to create a model that demonstrates a reason why animals bioluminesce. At the end of the week, they engineer cardboard arcade games highlighting something they've learned during the week.

Ocean Learning Adventures is held bilingually. We offer free transportation from Watsonville, Salinas, Marina, and Seaside. In 2023, we hosted two camps. We can't wait to offer the next iteration of the program this summer.



“It’s so fun to see students take on challenges, like kayaking or scuba diving, even if they’re a bit nervous beforehand. We get to encourage students to try these new things out — and then the students get to show themselves that they can do it.” — VAIL DARK, EDUCATION SPECIALIST

Underwater Explorers

The Underwater Explorers program was back for the first time since before the pandemic — 2,686 kids ages 8-13 surface scuba dived in our Great Tide Pool, exploring an intertidal environment full of hermit crabs, urchins, and anemones. A subset of this program, our Days of Discovery experience, offered 1,500 kids with special needs the opportunity to participate.



Teen Conservation Leaders are making a difference

In 2023, we offered our time-tested service-learning program for high school students, Teen Conservation Leaders. For the first time since the pandemic, we were able to enroll new students as well as continuing participants. Throughout summer and during the school year, students volunteer at the Aquarium, interacting with guests on the floor and contributing to behind-the-scenes efforts — making it an exciting summer for us and for Teen Conservation Leaders.

2023 by the numbers:

We worked with 71 students total: 38 new and 33 returning. Teens chose from three different specialized learning tracks:

- Guest:** 30 students interpreted exhibits for guests.
- Social Media:** Eight students ran an Aquarium Instagram account and learned to storytell through social media.
- Animal Care Technician:** Four students worked in Aquarium Learning Lab classrooms maintaining our animal tanks.

32 returning students mentored new students and participated in an additional learning track.



A visiting veterinary extern assists with a routine exam on Geysler, an African penguin, *Spheniscus demersus*.

“People aren’t used to seeing somebody who looks like me in positions of power or in a position in that field — so I want to pave the way.”

— DESIREE TORRES



Desiree Torres is interviewed by the media.

Engaging teachers at our Ocean Plastic Pollution Summit

We kicked off our 10th Ocean Plastic Pollution Summit in October — a program dedicated to working with classroom educators to design projects that engage their students in addressing plastic pollution. Chief Conservation and Science Officer Margaret Spring, a global leader in the campaign to end ocean plastic pollution, gave the keynote address. She detailed the latest findings on plastic pollution and shared signs of hope for turning the tide.

After Margaret’s keynote speech at the summit kickoff, educators had the chance to sleep over in the Aquarium galleries and participate in a full day of learning sessions centered on plastic pollution science and project pedagogy. We added new sessions about the intersections between plastics, human health, and social justice.

In January, teachers reconvened to talk about the projects their students are developing — and in May, they will bring their students to the Aquarium to share their results.



Margaret Spring at the Ocean Plastic Pollution Summit

Offering new opportunities to young adults

Our internship and veterinary externship programs are part of our commitment to foster new generations of conservation leaders — a diverse group of young people who are science-literate, confident, and ready to act.

In 2023, we welcomed 23 paid interns across many Aquarium departments, from applied water science and sea otter care and research, to marketing, husbandry, campus management, education, film and video production, and guest experience. Our interns supported our teams as they completed projects of their own — from an investigation into the changing composition of sea otter diets to a deep dive into new ways to make the Aquarium more inclusive for LGBTQ+ folks. Our four veterinary externs worked with Dr. Mike Murray and his Animal Care team as they progressed toward veterinary careers.



Rylee Jue

First Shultz Scholarships awarded

In May, we launched the George P. Shultz Future Leaders Scholarship Fund. This donor-endowed program supports students from nearby communities that are historically underrepresented in the science and conservation fields. The scholarship honors the memory of George P. Shultz, who chaired the Aquarium’s Leadership Council, served on our Board of Trustees, and enjoyed a long career in public service. Each Shultz Scholarship provides not only full tuition but also room and board and all other expenses, to attend California State University, Monterey Bay. The recipients of the inaugural scholarships were Rylee Jue and Desiree Torres, who participated in paid internships at the Aquarium during the summer of 2023 before beginning their academic journey in the fall.

Our goal in engaging young adults is to support new stewards of the ocean in pursuing their interests and to encourage them to make change in the world as professionals. With donor support, we hope to increase the number of Shultz Scholarships we can award each year. Thank you to the generous donors who have contributed to the Shultz Fund to date:

- In memory of S. D. Bechtel, Jr.
- Bruce Fairbanks
- Connie and Bob Lurie
- The Drs. Paul H. and Mary R. Meredith Family
- The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- Charlotte Mailliard Shultz
- Denise Littlefield Sobel
- Brayton Wilbur Foundation

Making global progress for ocean health

Giant kelp, *Macrocystis pyrifera*, growing on Eric's Pinnacle, a rocky reef off Pacific Grove, with a mixed school of blue rockfish, *Sebastes mystinus*, and blacksmiths, *Chromis punctipinnis*.

In the face of growing threats to ocean health, we're stepping up our actions to solve the greatest challenges: climate change, plastic pollution, and unsustainable fishing and aquaculture. In every area, we're working with policymakers, partners, and allies to shape lasting solutions — and using our respected voice to elevate these issues in the public eye.

A voice for the ocean in Washington, D.C.

In November, Executive Director Julie Packard brought the ocean to Washington, D.C., in a series of events that engaged legislators and staff on Capitol Hill, a full-house audience at the National Portrait Gallery, and key national and international journalists. Her appearances underscored the influence the Aquarium brings as a thought leader on crucial ocean issues.

Julie partnered with the Benioff Ocean Institute, The Pew Charitable Trusts, and Earthjustice to introduce an expert panel that briefed Congressional staff on the threats posed by seabed mining. She had productive meetings with Sens.



Julie Packard at the National Portrait Gallery

Alex Padilla (D-CA) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Martha Williams, as well as staff for Senator Laphonza Butler (D-CA) and California Reps. Jimmy Panetta (D-CA-19) and Zoe Lofgren (D-CA-18). Later, speaking at the State Department Foreign Press Center ahead of the COP28 climate negotiations, Julie emphasized the ocean's role as our primary defense against climate change.

At the National Portrait Gallery, she joined environmental leaders Dolores Huerta, Dr. Dorceta Taylor, and Wawa Gatheru in a conversation moderated by NPR journalist Emily Kwong addressing the importance of environmental justice and climate action in shaping the future of the environmental movement.

Julie and our ocean policy team continue to advocate in Washington, Sacramento, and globally for action to safeguard our blue planet.

Julie Packard addressed global journalists at the State Department's Foreign Press Center in advance of COP28 climate negotiations.





Speaking out globally for plastic pollution action

The Aquarium continues to be a prominent and respected voice in the fight against plastic pollution both internationally and here at home. Chief Conservation and Science Officer Margaret Spring co-authored the 2023 report of the Munderoo-Monaco Commission on Plastics and Human Health and its chapter on social and environmental justice. She briefed global negotiators and the Biden Administration on its findings and recommendations regarding the harmful impacts of plastic on human health throughout its lifecycle, from production to disposal. This included calling for a stronger U.S. plastic strategy domestically and in negotiations for a Global Plastic Treaty.

Margaret traveled to Thailand to speak about the critical need for action with leaders at the Economist Global Plastics Summit. The summit's outcomes shaped key discussions at the third meeting of the Global Plastic Treaty in Nairobi, Kenya. Margaret, alongside representatives from 150 countries, scientists, public health experts, conservation voices, and human rights advocates, led the call in Kenya for independent science to inform safe and effective solutions to the plastic pollution crisis.

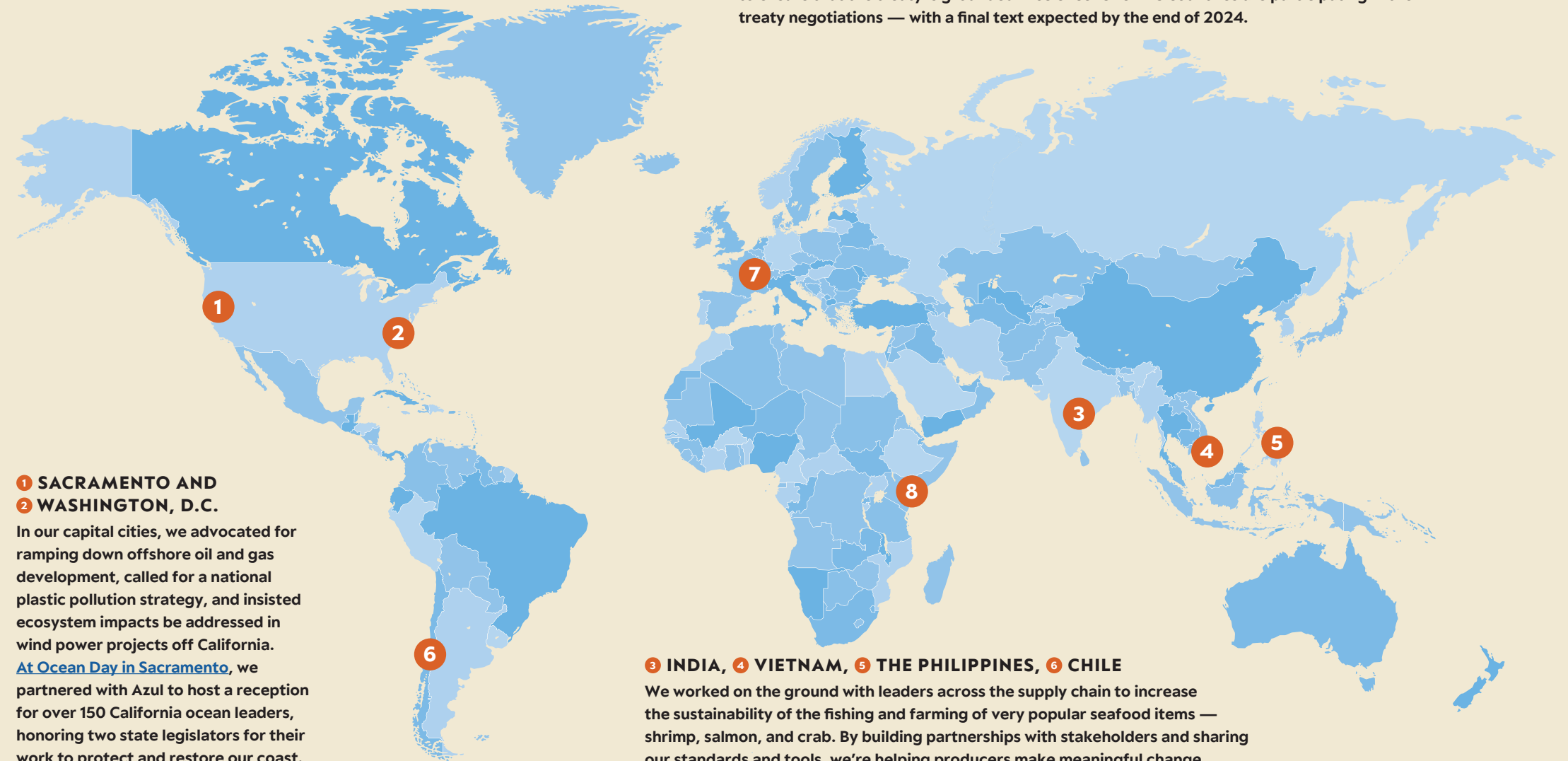
As the U.S. and other nations aim to finalize a global plastic treaty by the end of 2024, we continue our unwavering commitment to being ocean champions. We are dedicated to addressing plastic pollution as an intersectional issue that impacts people, wildlife, the environment, and our ocean.

Our global reach

Our staff, including a growing number of global fellows, are making a difference worldwide on critical issues affecting the ocean.

7 FRANCE, 8 KENYA

Our conservation leaders played key roles in the negotiations that took place in France and Kenya to draft a Global Plastic Treaty. We chaired an international scientific expert group to ensure that the treaty is grounded in science. Over 175 countries are participating in the treaty negotiations — with a final text expected by the end of 2024.



1 SACRAMENTO AND 2 WASHINGTON, D.C.

In our capital cities, we advocated for ramping down offshore oil and gas development, called for a national plastic pollution strategy, and insisted ecosystem impacts be addressed in wind power projects off California. [At Ocean Day in Sacramento](#), we partnered with Azul to host a reception for over 150 California ocean leaders, honoring two state legislators for their work to protect and restore our coast.

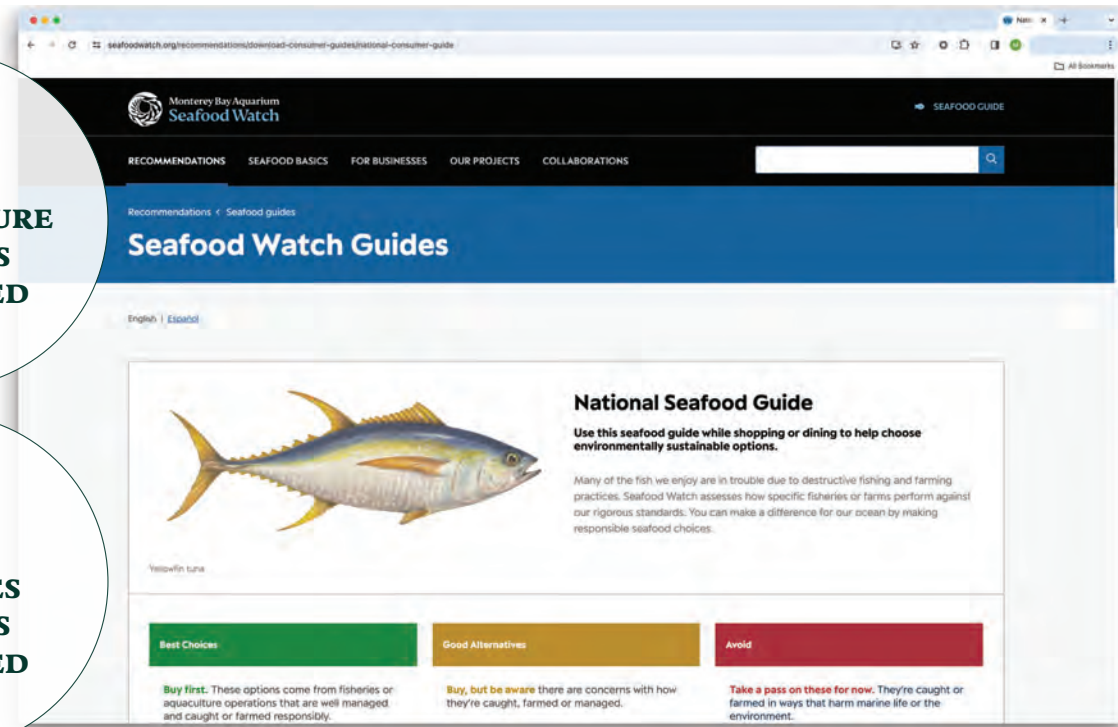
3 INDIA, 4 VIETNAM, 5 THE PHILIPPINES, 6 CHILE

We worked on the ground with leaders across the supply chain to increase the sustainability of the fishing and farming of very popular seafood items — shrimp, salmon, and crab. By building partnerships with stakeholders and sharing our standards and tools, we're helping producers make meaningful change.



8
AQUACULTURE
REPORTS
PUBLISHED

29
FISHERIES
REPORTS
PUBLISHED



Sharing a sustainable seafood message

Why choose sustainable seafood? When you ask for environmentally friendly seafood options, restaurants and retailers are prompted to seek out sustainable options from their suppliers. That demand ripples across the seafood supply chain, ultimately leading to improvements in how seafood is fished and farmed. That is, in essence, the Seafood Watch theory of change, rooted in market demand.

Our consumer-facing sustainability ratings and our outreach work over the past 25 years have helped build strong awareness and demand for sustainable seafood. This is

reflected in today's retail landscape: More than 85 percent of the top U.S., Canadian, and European seafood retailers have commitments to sustainable seafood. We're proud of the role we've played in this endeavor.

That's why we continue to improve our consumer tools — to make our recommendations easier to understand and more accessible to use.

Over the last year, we've developed digital versions of our popular National and West Coast seafood guides in both English and Spanish.

And, in response to demand for easy-to-use, species-centered information, our latest species guides provide in-depth information about how and where to find sustainable options for some of the most popular seafood items served in the U.S. We've created guides for salmon, shrimp, tuna, shellfish, catfish, cod, crab, and mahi mahi.



[FIND SEAFOOD GUIDES HERE](#)

New research on fisheries & aquaculture

We're proud of the extensive research the Aquarium's Global Ocean Conservation team conducts around the world to help improve seafood sustainability and learn more about ocean health. We're asking and answering tough questions like:

What amount of antibiotics can be used on a fish farm before it has negative effects on the environment? In Chile, we've hired a postdoctoral researcher to study how much antibiotic use on salmon farms is too much for the ecosystem to handle.

How long does a shark live after it's accidentally caught in a fishing net? We're working to gain insight about post-release survival rates of silky sharks and mantas and other rays, by tagging animals after they've been captured in fishing gear and then released.

What makes a seafood supply chain socially sustainable? Seafood Watch's Seafood Social Risk Tool profiles seafood production systems around the world and identifies areas at higher risk of involving forced labor, human trafficking, and hazardous child labor. We encourage our business partners to engage with suppliers to address those issues. This year, we released new profiles on warmwater shrimp.

How can shrimp farming provide greater benefit to local communities and farmers? In Indonesia and India, we recently conducted socioeconomic baseline studies to gain insight into how improvements in aquaculture practices might benefit the lives of small-scale farmers and their communities.



Chef Sheila Lucero, culinary director of Colorado's Big Red F Restaurant Group

Chefs Celebrated National Seafood Month

Chefs and culinary leaders have always been essential ambassadors for our work. Around the country, chefs are cooking their way toward solutions by serving and talking about environmentally sustainable seafood. To celebrate National Seafood Month in October, Seafood Watch chef collaborators shared some of their favorite sustainable dishes in a new Cooking for Solutions™ video series. Chef Steve Phelps, owner of Indigenous Restaurant in Sarasota, Florida, made a scallop crudo dish. In Colorado, Chef Sheila Lucero, culinary director of Big Red F Restaurant Group, made seared yellowfin tuna and Louisiana crawfish jambalaya. Monterey Bay Aquarium Executive Chef Matthew Beaudin made king crab Benedict. These chefs play a vital role in the Aquarium's efforts to promote sustainable seafood.



Kit cares for a rescued pup, 956-23, as part of the Aquarium's surrogacy program where stranded pups are trained by our resident female exhibit otters and reintroduced to the wild.

OUR SEA OTTER PROGRAM BY THE NUMBERS

Here's the impact of our program since it started in 1984.

39

YEARS

since we rescued our first sea otter in 1984

266

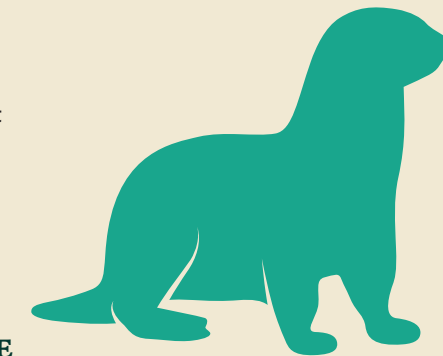
SEA OTTERS

rehabilitated and released back to the wild

85

NON-RELEASABLE OTTERS

placed at 13 different U.S. aquariums and zoos



73

PUPS REARED

through our sea otter surrogacy program

51

PUPS BORN IN THE WILD TO SURROGATE-REARED OTTERS THAT WE RESCUED, REHABILITATED, AND RELEASED

(These are only the pups we observed — there could be many more.)

Rescuing and rehabilitating southern sea otters

In 2001, our sea otter conservation program pioneered the use of surrogacy — pairing a stranded otter pup with an adult female otter in our long-term care — to help young otters acquire the skills to thrive in the wild. This year, we published a paper describing and evaluating our surrogacy methods, including everything from rescue response, pairing stranded sea otter pups with our resident female sea otters, and the release of the rescued otters. This publica-

tion emphasizes the pivotal role our unique surrogacy program plays in the successful return of young sea otters to the wild, and demonstrates how the program addresses the variety of challenges every rescued sea otter faces. Sharing our findings is an important way to inform colleagues about our successful methods and an exciting milestone as we work toward recovery of this threatened species.

On June 22, we returned three surrogate-raised otters to the wild, marking the highest number of surrogate-raised otters we've released at the same time in the history of our program. Our team spent two weeks tracking the otters by land, sea, and air to ensure each sea otter successfully used the skills they learned from their surrogate mother to reacclimate to the kelp forests of Monterey Bay.

“The economic benefits from such a small area are remarkable, and the role sea otters play in influencing how visitors value their visit demonstrates another benefit that sea otters can provide to their local communities.” — JESS FUJII, MONTEREY BAY AQUARIUM'S SEA OTTER PROGRAM MANAGER

Exploring all the benefits sea otters provide

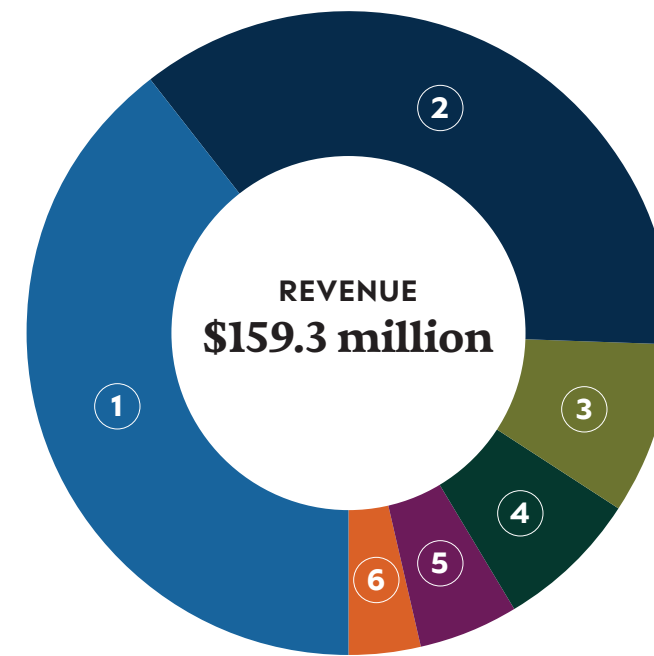
Sea otters are recognized for playing a key role in maintaining the health of productive kelp forests. Otters eat sea urchins and other animals that graze on giant kelp, keeping the urchin population under control and enabling a thriving kelp ecosystem. A publication by researchers at the

Aquarium and Middlebury Institute of International Studies' Center for the Blue Economy, found that otters have a role to play in local economies as well. As recreational visitors came to enjoy Elkhorn Slough, an estuary in Monterey Bay that is home to nearly 100 sea otters, they highly valued the ability to view sea otters in the wild. Visitors contribute an estimated \$3 million in annual revenue to local communities.



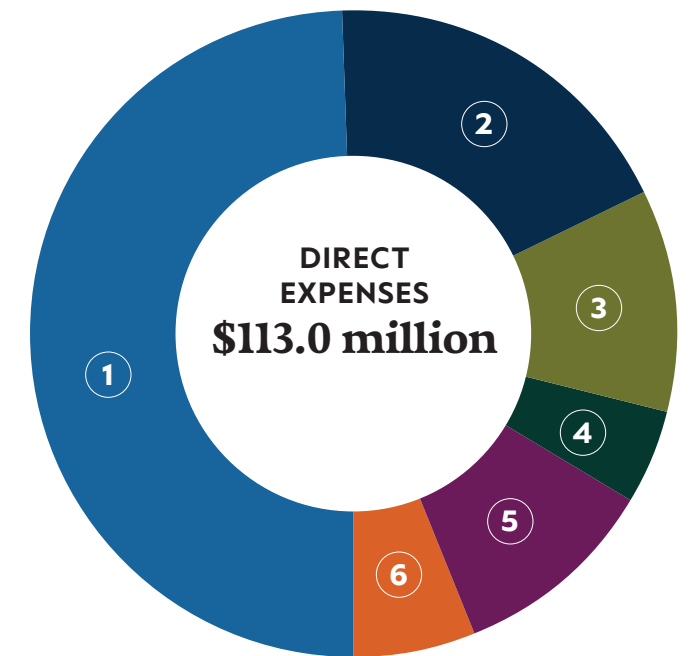
Our finances

This year we celebrate our 40th anniversary. Throughout the past decades, your exceptional and generous support has helped our programs grow and flourish. Since our founding in 1984, financial stewardship has been a top priority for the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Together, we've built a sound financial foundation that will allow us to advance our mission into the future.



1	Admissions	63.0 million
2	Contributions	57.7 million
3	Memberships	13.7 million
4	Endowment Distribution	11.2 million
5	Other Earned Revenue	8.0 million
6	Retail and Food Services	5.7 million

TOTAL **\$159.3 million**



1	Animal Care & Aquarium Experience	56.1 million
2	Communications & Outreach	20.7 million
3	Conservation & Science Programs	12.5 million
4	Education Programs	5.3 million
5	Management & General	11.5 million
6	Fundraising & Membership Services	6.9 million

TOTAL **\$113.0 million**

Capital Expenditures \$20.3 million

To continue advancing our conservation mission into the future, we must maintain our facility and innovative exhibits. In 2023, we continued replacing the supports for the intake pipe that brings seawater into the Aquarium, began construction on a sea otter rehabilitation facility, renovated our water quality lab, and completed other critical capital projects. And we're laying the groundwork for projects to come in 2025.

Figures are preliminary and unaudited. 2023 financial documents will be available at: MontereyBayAquarium.org/financials

Protecting the ocean into the future

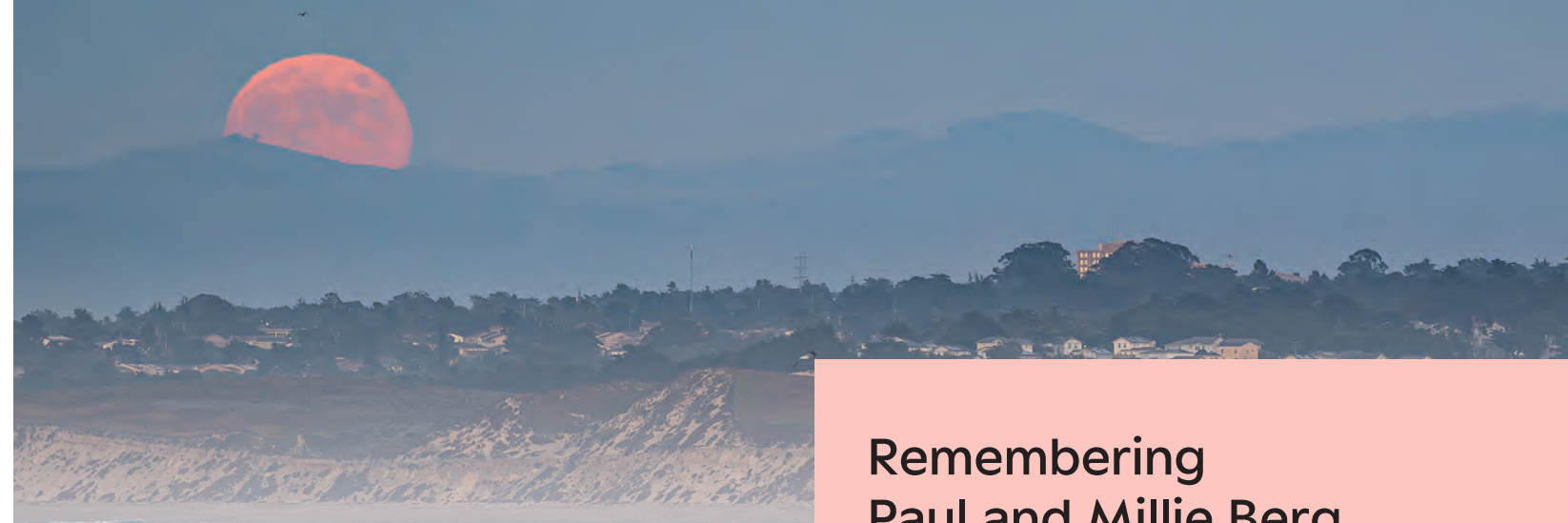
The Monterey Bay Aquarium's Endowment Fund is central to our mission: to inspire conservation of the ocean. The urgency of our work continues to grow and we are so grateful to our endowment donors who ensure the Aquarium's long-term financial health, thereby providing stability for our key programs. In 2023 our Endowment Fund reached a total of \$352 million. The annual distribution was \$11.2 million. Distributions from the endowment are allocated to the Aquarium's conservation and education programs as needed. The average annual return on investments in the Fund over the past five years is 8.6 percent. The Aquarium uses a conservative annual distribution formula, which is four percent of

the three-year rolling average market value of the Endowment Fund. In this way, the Fund provides revenue for the present while ensuring funds for the future. The Aquarium's Endowment Fund includes the Fund for the Future of the Ocean as well as the Children's Education Endowment Fund, the source of support for free Aquarium admission to California schoolchildren — something we've been committed to doing since opening day. Increasing the size of our endowment is a critical priority as the Aquarium moves toward its 40th anniversary. We need and appreciate our donors whose gifts today and through their wills, trusts, and other planned-giving vehicles provide vital support.

Endowment Society Members

We are pleased to recognize our generous donors who joined the Aquarium's Endowment Society with gifts of \$100,000 or more. Donors who join the Endowment Society may elect to be recognized with a fund in their name, or in honor of a family member or friend.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
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| Gill Family Trust in loving memory of Ravinderjit Kaur Gill | The David and Lucile Packard Foundation | |
| The Green Family | Pamela J. Pescosolido | |
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Remembering Paul and Millie Berg

Paul and Millie (Mildred) joined the Aquarium as members in 2007 and soon thereafter became Betty White Ocean Legacy Circle members. They gave gifts every year, with Millie passionate about caring for and protecting all sea animals. Fifty-year residents of Stanford, Millie passed away on November 7, 2021 followed by Paul on February 15, 2023. We salute their deep and abiding love of science and conservation and we are deeply honored by their generous bequest.



Paul and Mildred Berg. Paul received a 1980 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for his work in genetic sequencing.

Leaving a legacy for the ocean

We also wish to express our gratitude to the 848 members in our Betty White Ocean Legacy Circle for their dedication to the Aquarium. Their gifts in the future will be critical to securing a healthy ocean for generations to come.

With deep gratitude and great sadness, we acknowledge the kindness and generosity of our friends and Betty White Ocean Legacy Circle members who passed away in recent years. Their legacy gifts will have a lasting impact. With profound respect, we recognize the following donors:

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
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How to create your own legacy

Gifts of all sizes and types advance our work. If you are ready to create your own legacy with the Aquarium, please contact the Gift Planning team at lastinglegacy@mbayaq.org or at 831.648.4913.



We are exceptionally grateful to the following donors for their gifts received in 2023.

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The Executive Leadership Council of the Packards' Circle recognizes individuals and family foundations that support the Aquarium with gifts of \$100,000 or more annually.

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Thank you



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IN MEMORIAM

Gordon and Betty Moore were visionary philanthropists, ocean champions



The Monterey Bay Aquarium family mourns the passing in 2023 of Gordon and Betty Moore. Gordon was a true giant in business and technology; together, he and Betty were visionary philanthropists and leaders in ocean conservation. They were longtime supporters of the Aquarium and our work to inspire conservation of the ocean.

Gordon was the second recipient of our David Packard Award, which recognizes individuals whose activities and achievements embody the qualities of thought and action that David Packard held dear. His impact as a thinker and leader in the birth of Silicon Valley was matched by the lasting difference he and Betty made through their philanthropy. All of us who care about science, the environment, and human well-being in all its meanings owe him a debt of gratitude.

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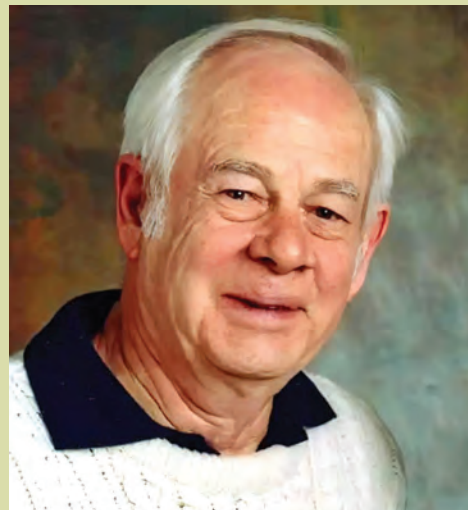
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Dave Powell's innovative approach shaped the look of the Aquarium's exhibits

As our first director of animal care, Dave Powell transformed exhibit design and the range of marine life species that aquariums could bring to the public. He also made sure our Animal Care staff had time and space to learn how to raise new species. In doing so, he has enabled us to inspire millions of visitors by connecting people with ocean life in compelling ways.

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Jonelle Verdugo's dedication, leadership left a lasting impact

Behind our remarkable living exhibits are truly remarkable people. In her 25 years with our Animal Care team, Jonelle's curiosity, creativity, and dedication inspired her teammates and enriched our exhibits. She raised seahorses with uncommon skill and mentored colleagues as a talented and caring curator of fishes and invertebrates. Though we lost Jonelle too young, the influence of her example lives on.

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Celebrating Rosa via livestream

Video game streamer Douglas Wreden — known online as DougDoug — hosted his fifth birthday fundraiser for the 24th birthday of Rosa, the matriarch of our sea otter exhibit. In a two-day marathon of livestreaming, he and 5,685 of his generous DougDoug Community followers contributed more than \$300,000 to support our sea otter conservation efforts. Doug visited the Aquarium often during his childhood, which inspired his love for our animals — as well as his amazing work over the past five years to raise awareness and funds for our programs!



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You can recommend a gift to the Aquarium from your donor-advised fund by contacting your donor-advised fund representative.

■ Make a gift with a charitable IRA rollover

If you are 70½ years old or older, the IRA charitable rollover allows you to make tax-free charitable gifts of up to \$100,000 per year, directly from your IRA to the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

■ Honor someone special with a gift in their name

Make a memorial or tribute gift to honor a loved one or to celebrate a special occasion — such as a birthday — and extend their legacy.

■ Matching gifts

Many employers have matching gift programs, which is a wonderful way to double or even triple your support. Some employers may even match your volunteer time, even if you are now retired.

■ Become a business member

Join a community of like-minded businesses committed to a world with a healthy ocean while enjoying special access to the Aquarium's world-class visitor experiences.

■ Join our Betty White Ocean Legacy Circle

Make a big impact by including the Monterey Bay Aquarium in your estate plan. You can make a bequest through your will or living trust for a specific amount, a specific asset, or a percentage of your estate.

■ Grow the Aquarium's endowment

Provide long-term support for the Aquarium's education initiatives and conservation and science programming. Individuals who give \$100,000 or more become part of our Endowment Society.

Thank you!

2023 Annual Review photo credits

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To make a donation

- **Make a secure donation online at**
MontereyBayAquarium.org/SupportNow.
- **Give us a call at 831.648.4880 or send us an email at donors@mbayaq.org.**
- **Send a check to Monterey Bay Aquarium**
Attn: Development Office,
886 Cannery Row, Monterey, CA 93940

Monterey Bay Aquarium

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Monterey, CA 93940
831.648.4880

Our mission
is to inspire
conservation
of the ocean.

