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Sharks at Stingray Bay

Now with Horseshoe Crabs!

KEY MESSAGES

- The Sharks at Stingray Bay exhibit is returning to the Toronto Zoo for the 2010 peak season. It is a supervised and interactive exhibit and this year will also have the addition of horseshoe crabs for visitors to enjoy seeing up close in a low-walled pool.
- The Sharks at Stingray Bay exhibit welcomed over 390,000 visitors in 2009.
- The exhibit is built and managed by Living Exhibits (LE), marine experts with similar exhibits installed in several prominent US zoos.
- The pool and life-support system for the animals is state of the art.
- LE works closely with TZ Curators, Veterinarians, Animal Care and Security staff to ensure that all zoo protocols are followed and exceeded in the development and management of this exhibit.
- As in 2009, the experience is highly supervised and every precaution is taken for the safety and security of visitors and the animal collection.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: What is Sharks at Stingray Bay?

Answer: Sharks at Stingray Bay is a temporary interactive exhibit, which has been at the Zoo for two years (2008 & 2009), now with the addition of horseshoe crabs in a 60,500 litre saltwater pool.

Question: How long will the exhibit be at the Zoo?

Answer: The exhibit is open from May 22 to October 11, 2010.

Question: What are the hours for the Stingrays?

Answer: From May 22 to Sept. 6 the hours are: 9:30am to 6:30pm.
From Sept. 8 to October 11, the hours are 9:30am to 5pm.

Question: Is there a separate fee to see this exhibit?

Answer: Yes, there is a \$3 per person fee above the regular Zoo admission fees for all visitors, including Members.
Children 3 and under are free.
Children attending in a school group are \$1 each.
Tickets can be purchased at the admission gates and at the entrance to the exhibit.

Question: Where will the exhibit be located?

Answer: The exhibit is located in the Group Events Tent in Zellers Discovery Zone. (same location as in 2009)

Question: Where does this exhibit come from?

Answer: This exhibit is a state-of-the-art saltwater pool and life-support system built and managed by Living Exhibits Inc., marine exhibit experts based out of San Diego, California.

Living Exhibits install and manage several similar exhibits in zoos across North America such as the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, Milwaukee Zoo, Brookfield Zoo (Chicago), Mystic Aquarium, Phoenix Zoo and Fresno Zoo.

While Living Exhibits are marine exhibit experts, they also work closely with Toronto Zoo's Curator of Fishes, Veterinarians, Animal Care and Security staff to ensure that all Toronto Zoo animal care, exhibit, conservation standards and policies are met.

Question: How do we ensure the safety of the animals in the exhibit and our visitors?

Answer: This is our second year with this temporary exhibit. The Stingray exhibit was very well received by visitors in 2008.

All precautions put in place in 2008 and 2009 to ensure the safety of our visitors and the animal collection will continue in 2010. Specifically, the experience is supervised, visitors are required to wash their hands and arms prior to entering the exhibit, the stingray barbs are humanely trimmed and Living Exhibits protocols and systems are of the highest standards. Sharks at Stingray Bay boast a state-of-the art life support system to service the pool and balance important water chemistry.

The Toronto Zoo's exhibit is designed, constructed and managed by marine exhibit experts, Living Exhibits, owned by Mike Yeakle and Dr. Brian Joseph. Mike Yeakle has worked at Sea World parks as an animal behaviourist and ultimately Manager of Animal Behaviour at Sea World of Ohio and Sea World of San Diego. Brian Joseph, DVM was a staff veterinarian at Sea World before moving onto the Brookfield and Minnesota zoos and the Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium. Dr. Joseph was recently awarded 2006 Accreditation Inspector of the Year by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

Question: How will visitors interact with the horseshoe crabs, sharks and stingrays?

Answer: Stingrays are gentle creatures and the pool is very large with ample resting space in the centre should the animals choose to rest.

In a supervised setting and after hand-washing and the removal of any jewellery, visitors will be permitted to gently place their hands in the water at the side of the pool. If they are lucky, a stingray will swim by and brush up against their hand.

Nurse sharks and white-spotted bamboo sharks and horseshoe crabs are sedentary and bottom dwellers, typically resting during the day. During operating hours there will also be special keeper talks with feedings. In addition, several education volunteers will be available at all times to answer questions.

Question: Is the 'interaction' with these marine animals safe?

Answer: Yes, the experience is supervised and safe. All visitors will be required to wash their hands and arms before and after the exhibit. Animal care and interpretive staff will be in the exhibit at all times to assist visitors.

The stingray barbs or stingers, are similar to fingernails, and are humanely trimmed prior to their introduction to the pool. They grow back slowly over several months and will likely not require any further trimming while the exhibit is open.

The sharks are more sedentary species and bottom dwellers. They will be visible but shy about swimming near the edges of the pool.

Question: What kind of crabs, sharks and stingrays will be in the exhibit?

Answer: Two species of stingrays, Cownose and Southern, two species of sharks – Nurse and White-spotted bamboo, and Horseshoe crabs.

Question: How big are they?

Answer: A Southern stingray female can grow to approximately four feet across; the male to two and a half feet. The cownose female grows to approximately two to three feet across with the males slightly smaller.

Nurse sharks can grow to 7 ½ feet to 9 feet. White spotted bamboo sharks grow to up to 2-3 feet in length.

Horseshoe crabs can be up to 24 inches in length (including the tail); females are larger than males.

Question: Where can I get more information about this exhibit and the Toronto Zoo?

Answer: By visiting torontozoo.com.