



WATER WE UP TO

The Ucluelet Aquarium's Kind-Of-Monthly Newsletter



A MOMENTOUS MARCH

March is always a fun month for the Ucluelet Aquarium. After a winter of collecting, cleaning, pipe-reaming, and other physical tasks, our arm muscles have grown large but our talking muscles have diminished slightly. But once our doors are open, it only takes the wide eyes of one amazed visitor to melt our hearts and get us talking their ears off. Of course it's easy to be excited when the aquarium is stock-full of new and amazing creatures and displays.

In addition to being our season-kick-off, March was also a month of fantastic partnership events. We were excited to participate in Jamie's Bioblitz in Tofino, as well as Surfider Pacific Rim's First Street Dock Clean. The Aquarium also hosted Surfider's Rise Above Plastic workshops where community members were taught about environmentally friendly toiletries and household cleaning alternatives. We even got to make our own products and take them home.



HIGHLIGHTS

OUR FIRST MONTH - A MOMENTOUS MARCH

LIVE MUSIC IN THE AQUARIUM

EARTH DAY, 2019

FEATURE: ROCKFISH CONSERVATION

SPONSORSHIP

SHEDDING LIGHT ON OUR SKATE EGG CASE



Our annual public beach seine took place at Terrace Beach and was generously hosted by Terrace Beach Resort. We found a beautiful variety of animals, most of which we released back to the water that day. Some got to come with us and will be spending the season at the Aquarium. Don't worry - they'll be returned to Terrace Beach in December!



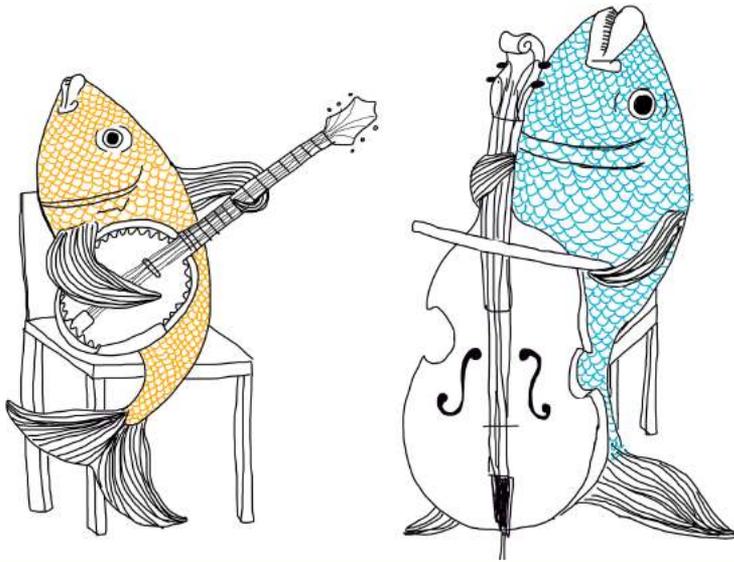
For the first time ever, the Aquarium is featuring touch tanks collected and curated by the Ucluelet Aquarium Elementary School. With the help of Aquarium staff and Raincoast Education Society, the UES grade 4/5 class collected animals for two of our touch tanks (including a large sea cucumber named "Bobby," yes with two 'y's). The kids did a fantastic job despite the unexpected March snow! The animals will be staying with us throughout the season then will be released in December with the rest of our touch tank critters.



Our visitors and social media followers helped us pick a name for our new octopus. In honour of International Women's Day we asked people to share the names of inspiring women. Our beautiful lady octopus is now named Hildegard von Bingen. Hildegard was a 12th century German nun and the first person to put hops in beer. She was also a philosopher, composer, and author to some of the first biological texts in Germany!

Last, but definitely not least, we got to witness the first Ucluelet Harbour herring spawn in over 50 years! For over a week the harbour was full of sea lions, seals, whales, eagles and sea birds, all feasting on the herring and herring roe. It was a truly spectacular event to witness. Some herring even showed up right in front of the Aquarium itself! For more information and photos visit our Facebook or Instagram.





LIVE MUSIC IN THE AQUARIUM

Saturday, April 13th, 7:30 pm - 10:30 pm

Swing by the Aquarium for a relaxing evening of live music from Left at the Junction and Glass Half Full. This is a 19+ event. Admission: \$7 at the door. Music from 8 pm - 10 pm.

EARTH DAY, 2019

April 22nd

Seeing as the earth is 71% ocean we will absolutely be celebrating Earth Day. Every group who comes in on Earth Day will be entered to win a free family pass or 4 free day passes (winner's choice).

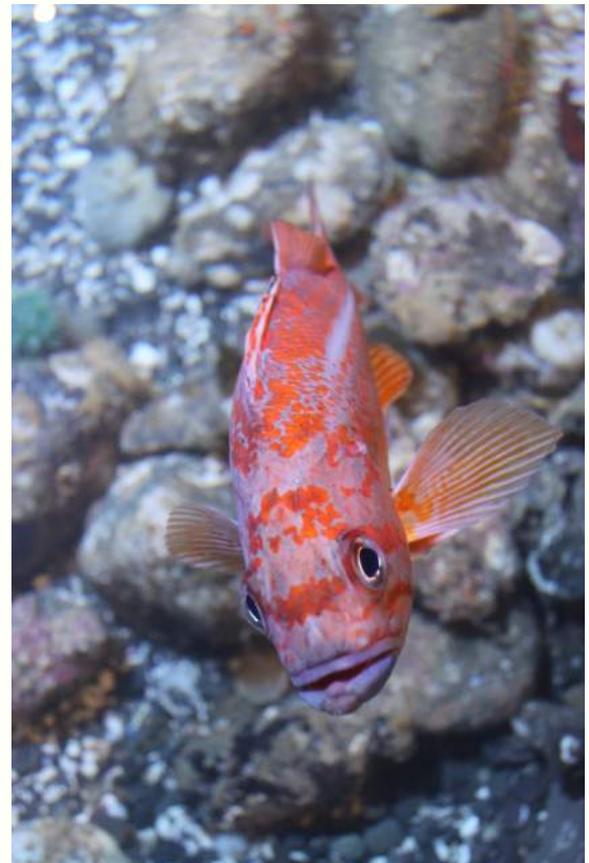
ROCKFISH CONSERVATION - OUR 2 CENTS

The Ucluelet Aquarium has been very fortunate to host a variety of rockfish species over the years. We LOVE rockfish. Not only are they remarkably charismatic and beautiful, they are incredible from a biological point of view as well. Some species can live over 120 years and don't even begin to reproduce until their thirties. Sadly, and somewhat unsurprisingly, their populations are experiencing huge losses due to overfishing. In Barkley Sound, some species are at an estimated 20% of their historical population size.



How you can help: There are a number of ways that you can help the recovery of inshore rockfish. Number one – know your fish! Whether you're harvesting or purchasing the first step is to know what exactly is on your plate. Rockfish are often sold under different aliases. Rockfish are often called "snapper" or "rock cod." Where was the fish bought?

How was it caught? Know what you're buying and, if possible, choose sustainable options. If you are a fisherman (or woman) the most direct way you can help these fish is to use a descending device when dealing with rockfish by-catch (unwanted catch). Some good descending devices are the SeaQualizer and the RokLees Descender. Send those fish down!



SPONSORSHIP

Some of our tanks are still looking for sponsors. We also have sponsorship opportunities for our monthly microplastic surveys. Visit our website or email patrick@uclueletaquarium.org for more information.

WWW.UCLUELETAQUARIUM.ORG
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OPEN EVERY DAY
 10 AM - 5 PM
 MARCH TO MID-NOVEMBER

SHEDDING LIGHT ON OUR SKATE EGG CASE

In August 2018 we were brought a skate egg case, also known to beach combers as a "mermaids purse." It had been found high and dry on a local sandy beach and due to its state upon arrival we had low hopes that anything was alive inside. Despite this, we decided to keep it in one of our tanks on the off chance that the babies might survive.

Fast forward six months and the egg case had begun to float, indicating that the egg case was no longer sealed to the outside environment. This meant that either there was nothing inside, or if there was, that the embryos had developed enough to be exposed to water from the outside environment.

Skate egg case development is pretty remarkable. For the first five months the hard collagen casing is sealed completely. In these early months of development the young skates are unable to handle the outside water full of parasites, bacteria and other such potential harms. Over time, however, the collagen fibres begin to degrade and pull apart, slowly allowing water to seep into the case. By the time this happens the skates have grown and developed enough to handle microscopic threats but still need the physical protection from predators that the tough case provides.

As our 2019 season approached and the egg case developed (or remained empty) we wanted to know if there was anything inside. If there wasn't, we would dry the case out. If there was, the young were capable of handling exposure to sea water and we could better keep an eye on their development.

Following a procedure used by numerous aquariums and marine education centres, we carefully replaced a segment of casing with a transparent sheet. In doing this we could discover the status of the embryos and, if they were alive, get a rare and incredible chance to watch and record the development of these young skates.

STEP 1

Slowly, carefully, and with a sterilized tools, our marine biologists cut through the tough egg casing. Amazingly, we found THREE young skates with intact yolk sacs.

STEP 2

After drying the surface of the egg case, we sealed the opening with a sterile piece of transparent sheet and adhesive. The sheet keeps planktonic larvae from settling inside of the egg case and maintains the structural integrity of the original case while allowing us to observe the skates inside.

STEP 3

After letting the adhesive quickly dry, we carefully removed the excess air from the casing and re-submerged it in the water.

STEP 4

Based on information provided by publications and other aquariums, these skates should hatch in the next two to three months. We will be working closely with these organizations to create an animal care plan in hopes that they hatch successfully. In the meantime we are making observations and taking regular measurements.

