



# NEWS RELEASE



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## **SHEDD AQUARIUM'S DOLPHINS AND WHALES** **'ON VACATION' IN NEW ENGLAND**

*Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration temporarily houses Chicago's  
marine mammals; opens new marine mammal observatory*

**Mystic, Conn.** – The John G. Shedd Aquarium today announced that all seven beluga whales and four Pacific white-sided dolphins have been relocated to Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration. Travelling nearly 1,000 miles, the pool-to-plane-to pool journey marks the beginning of Shedd Aquarium's nine-month renovation of the Oceanarium, its popular marine mammal pavilion.

"Animal care is our top priority and we've been planning this comprehensive move for nearly a year," said Ken Ramirez, senior vice president of animal collections and animal training at Shedd Aquarium. "Throughout the entire transport, our expert animal care staff remained side-by-side with our beloved marine mammals, attentively tending to their every need as they made their trek across the country. We are pleased that all of our animals are in excellent health and are quickly adjusting to their new temporary surroundings."

Stephen Coan, CEO and president of Mystic Aquarium & Institute of Exploration, a division of Sea Research Foundation, Inc., welcomed the Shedd animals and staff to their new temporary homes.

"Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration has a long-standing animal care and research relationship with Shedd Aquarium. We are honored and excited that our colleagues from Chicago chose us to accommodate their animals during their renovation," said Coan. "We look forward to continuing our work with them on important research and collaborations that improve the quality of life for the animals in our care, and animals in the wild."

Shedd Aquarium's president and CEO Ted A. Beattie agreed, "It is a wonderful opportunity to have two highly professional organizations working together for a common goal, providing the best care for our animals. We thank Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration for their support during this time and look forward to working more closely with them throughout our stay."

Shedd's marine mammals arrived in Mystic via two carefully coordinated marine mammal transports, spending most of their travel time on a plane, courtesy of FedEx Express, the world's largest express transportation company. While the two organizations are experienced with marine mammal transports, this was one of the largest for both.

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According to Ramirez, Shedd's seven beluga whales, including two juveniles named Bella and Miki, are acclimating well to their new surroundings in a holding area that offers limited public viewing; however, they will all eventually be integrated with Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration's three resident beluga whales currently on public display in the Arctic Coast exhibit. Shedd's four Pacific white-sided dolphins are living together in Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration's Aquatic Animal Study Center.

The new Gurdon and Kathy Wattles Marine Mammal Observatory overlooks the Aquatic Animal Study Center, which was formerly off-limits to the public. The observatory affords guests a clear view of animals residing in the center's two large, circular pools. The first inhabitants are Shedd's visiting Pacific white-sided dolphins. This marks the first time since 2000 that Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration has dolphins on public display.

"This is an exciting time for us here at Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration and we encourage New Englanders to visit the aquarium before Shedd's marine mammals return to Chicago next spring," said Coan. "With the opening of the new observatory, our guests will see, for the first time in the northeast, Pacific white-sided dolphins up close. And once Shedd's belugas are fully integrated with our guest-favorite beluga whales, the Arctic Coast will be one of the most impressive beluga exhibits in the country."

Along with the temporary relocation of their animals, Shedd also moved 12 staff members from Chicago to the Connecticut aquarium. "The wellbeing and health of our animals is our top priority and in order to provide consistency with their care, members of our staff were more than willing to relocate with our animals. They will remain with them throughout their entire stay in Mystic," said Ramirez, who acknowledged Shedd is covering all staff expenses, including relocation, housing, and ancillary expenses. "We are strongly committed to our staff and their professional development, and this is a wonderful opportunity as well to bring our two professional staffs together to share knowledge and learn from each other."

Tracy Romano, senior vice president of research & zoological operations at Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration, emphasized the important research both organizations will benefit from while Shedd's animals are at Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration. "Besides learning from one another, we'll be studying the physiology, behaviors, and vocalization of Shedd's visiting whales and our resident whales, and compare that information with data we've collected from beluga whales in the wild. No one has ever been able to make the connections between all three.

"Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration is also excited to work with Shedd's animal care and animal health experts to increase our understanding of Pacific white-sided dolphins and support them in their important dolphin research efforts."

Shedd Aquarium and Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration are accredited members of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA). They both participate in the North American breeding cooperative, which collectively advances important knowledge about the amazing animals in their care and in the wild.

### **About Marine Mammal Transport**

Shedd Aquarium and Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration recently relocated Shedd's seven beluga whales and four Pacific white-sided dolphins to Mystic, Conn. Animal care experts strategically completed the two separate animal transports in the safest, most efficient mode of transportation possible, ensuring water to water time was at a minimum. During the transports, the animals rest comfortably in a customized 'hammock' that is secured inside a specifically designed container filled with water. The 'hammock' supports the animal's body weight and the water helps keep them cool. Animal care and animal health staffs ride side-by-side with each animal throughout the entire transport, which includes riding on both trucks and plane.

Dozens of Shedd and Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration's animal care, animal health, and operations experts were involved with the successful transports in both cities, along with FedEx's expert animal movers. The transport teams first moved four beluga whales and two Pacific white-sided dolphins, followed by a second move of Shedd's remaining three beluga whales and two Pacific white-sided dolphins. The transport marked the first time three of Shedd's beluga whales, including two-year old Bella and one-year old Miki (MEE-kee), departed Shedd.

### **About John G. Shedd Aquarium**

Since 1930, the John G. Shedd Aquarium has been connecting the human world to the aquatic world through its majestic and unique animals, award-winning exhibits, leading conservation and research initiatives, and world-class educational programming. Caring for more than 32,000 animals, representing nearly 1,600 species from around the world, Shedd Aquarium is the "world's aquarium." From its architecturally historic aquarium galleries, to its world-renowned marine mammal pavilion, the Oceanarium, to the colorful and exciting *Wild Reef* exhibit, Shedd Aquarium is one of the preeminent aquariums in the world. Shedd ranks as Chicago's top attended cultural attraction and one of the top attended aquariums in North America – welcoming more than 2 million guests every year.

From September 2, 2008 through early summer 2009, Shedd's Oceanarium will be under renovation; however the original aquarium and the *Wild Reef* remain open, offering guests never before offered experiences and programming – including a new pet show, narrated dive in the *Wild Reef*, more animal encounters, Camp Shedd, and behind the scenes tours. For more information, visit [www.sheddaquarium.org](http://www.sheddaquarium.org)

### **About Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration**

Mystic Aquarium, Institute for Exploration and Immersion Presents are divisions of Sea Research Foundation, Inc., a private, non-profit, charitable organization incorporated in the State of Connecticut. The mission of Sea Research is to inspire people to care for and protect our ocean planet through education, research and exploration.

Founded in 1973, Mystic Aquarium is one of America's leading aquariums, with 70+ exhibits of more than 12,000 fish, invertebrates and marine mammals, as well as a leading animal rescue center and research department. A base for the famed oceanographer and explorer Dr. Robert Ballard – known best for his discovery of the *RMS Titanic*, the Institute for Exploration is a leader in deep sea technology. Immersion Presents serves as the production and national education division, which develops curricula around Dr. Ballard's explorations and brings them into educational institutions around the country through real-time broadcasts. For more information, visit [www.mysticaquarium.org](http://www.mysticaquarium.org).