

press release

One of the World's Rarest Rays Debuts at S.E.A. Aquarium

- S.E.A. Aquarium is the world's first wildlife institution to feature the endangered ornate eagle ray
- Discover new fishy friends, catch Scuba Santa and Elves' underwater adventures and join Guardians of the S.E.A.A. as part of Merry Fishmas festivities



This December, have a Merry Fishmas at S.E.A. Aquarium and discover five new fishy residents, including the endangered ornate eagle ray (*left*) – the first of its kind to be featured in a wildlife institution. In addition to the new residents, crowd favourites such as Scuba Santa (*right*) and Elves will make a comeback with their cheeky underwater antics as they dive amongst sharks, manta rays and hundreds of schooling fish to provide treats for the animals. PHOTO CREDITS: RESORTS WORLD SENTOSA.

SINGAPORE, 23 November 2017 – This holiday season, one of the world's rarest rays – the ornate eagle ray – will make its debut at S.E.A. Aquarium in Resorts World Sentosa. The endangered species is the first of its kind to be featured in zoos and aquariums worldwide, and guests can look forward to learning more about this strikingly beautiful but elusive animal at S.E.A. Aquarium's annual Merry Fishmas celebrations.

From 1 December 2017 to 1 January 2018, S.E.A. Aquarium transforms into a water wonderland with sparkling displays, interactive activities, Scuba Santa and Elves' underwater adventures and more. In addition to the educational and fun festivities for the whole family, guests can embark on a trail to spot five of the aquarium's latest additions: the ornate eagle ray, Argentine humphead, Mauritius triggerfish, honeycomb cowfish and bat ray.

The most iconic amongst the newest residents is the **ornate eagle ray** (*Aetomylaeus vespertilio*), a shy sea creature known for its distinct pattern of reticulate dark lines and rings on its back. Together with its whip-like tail, the ray can measure up to 5m, with a wing span of up to 240cm. S.E.A. Aquarium's male ray arrived in August this year and can be found at the Shipwreck Habitat, along with other threatened species such as the shark ray, green sea turtle and hawksbill turtle.

Mr Jason Horkin, Senior Vice President of Attractions, Resorts World Sentosa, said: “The ornate eagle ray is indeed an extremely rare and precious wonder in our marine life collection. We are pleased it has settled comfortably into its new home at S.E.A. Aquarium and has even responded positively to our aquarists during feeding sessions. There’s so much to learn about the ornate eagle ray: little is known about this species and we plan to study as much as we can to broaden our scientific knowledge and understanding, and support the conservation of this rare beauty. In the long run, we hope to collaborate with reputable institutions to introduce females to our male ray to kickstart the world’s first conservation breeding programme for this species under human care.”

The ornate eagle ray is listed as "Endangered" in the IUCN* Red List of Threatened Species. The main threat to the species is accidental capture by fishermen in the waters of Australia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Taiwan and Thailand. In addition, the species has a low reproduction rate.

In addition to the new fishy residents, crowd favourites such as **Scuba Santa and Elves** will make a comeback with their cheeky underwater antics as they dive amongst sharks, majestic manta rays and hundreds of schooling fish to provide special enrichment treats for the animals. Guests can also observe up-close the aquarium’s male giant Pacific octopus during feeding time as it uses its tentacles to reach out for hidden treats in a box – a perfect enrichment toy for these highly intelligent animals.

Guests can learn more about the growing plastic pollution problem at conservation booths. Those who wish to play a more active role in ocean conservation can sign up for the new **Guardians of the S.E.A.A.** membership at S\$8 to enjoy exclusive perks such as invitations to members-only conservation activities, talks, workshops and events.

Merrymakers can marvel at a dazzling **3.2-metre tall Fishmas tree** made of over 300 plastic bottles assembled by young environmentalists, and get creative with Scrooge and learn how to use recycled materials to transform them into Christmas ornaments. Guests can also purchase reusable canvas bags and have fun colouring them to create personalised, ocean-friendly gifts for their loved ones. Those hungry for a quick bite can indulge in Mrs Claus’ festive cupcake treats at her sweet-smelling bakery near the Open Ocean Habitat.

As part of the holiday festivities, kids can look forward to meeting the aquarium’s adorable mascots – Mai the manta ray and Sam the hammerhead shark – all decked out in Christmas outfits. Singapore residents enjoy discounts on admission at S\$30 for an adult one-day ticket (U.P. S\$34), and S\$18 for a child/senior citizen ticket (U.P. S\$24).

Refer to Appendix A for more information on the five new species and Merry Fishmas festivities.

**IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature*

ABOUT S.E.A. AQUARIUM

Opened in November 2012, S.E.A. Aquarium at Resorts World Sentosa is one of the world's largest aquariums home to more than 100,000 marine animals from across 1,000 species. Featuring more than 50 diverse habitats, S.E.A. Aquarium exhibits close to 80 threatened species including the manta ray, Clarion angelfish and a variety of beautiful corals that mirror a pristine aquatic environment. Through interactive programmes, up-close animal encounters and immersive learning journeys, S.E.A. Aquarium aims to inspire visitors to protect the world's oceans.

S.E.A. Aquarium collaborates with local and regional partners in marine conservation projects and is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA).

ABOUT RESORTS WORLD SENTOSA

Resorts World Sentosa (RWS), Asia's premium lifestyle destination resort, is located on Singapore's resort island of Sentosa. Spanning 49 hectares, RWS is home to four world-class attractions including Universal Studios Singapore, S.E.A. Aquarium, Dolphin Island and Adventure Cove Waterpark. Other attractions include the Asian flagship of a world-renowned destination spa, a casino, six unique hotels and the Resorts World Convention Centre. With the most number of Michelin stars in one destination, RWS offers award-winning dining experiences at renowned celebrity chef restaurants, establishing itself as a key player in Singapore's vibrant and diverse dining scene. The integrated resort also offers world-class entertainment, from original resident productions to concerts and public shows such as the Crane Dance and the Lake of Dreams. RWS has been named "Best Integrated Resort" since 2011 for seven consecutive years at the TTG Travel Awards which recognises the best of Asia-Pacific's travel industry.

RWS is wholly owned by Genting Singapore, a company of the Genting Group. For more information, please visit www.rwsentosa.com.

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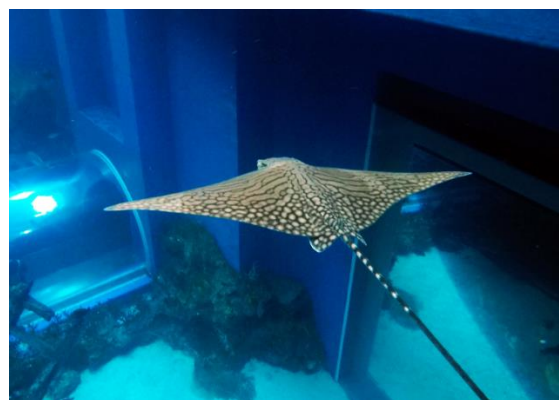
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Appendix A: Latest Animal Residents and Merry Fishmas Activities

Note to Editors

1. Video on the five newest fishy residents (including ornate eagle ray) can be viewed [here](#)
2. Photos and videos can be downloaded from <https://app.box.com/v/MerryFishmas2017>
3. All photos and videos are to be attributed to **Resorts World Sentosa**

PROGRAMME	VENUE & TIMINGS
Scuba Santa and Elves Underwater Adventures 	Animal Feeding Sessions (Daily) Shipwreck Habitat: 2pm Coral Garden: 12pm Open Ocean Habitat: 4pm Show Venue: Open Ocean Habitat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.30pm daily • Additional show at 1.45pm on 2, 3, 9, 10, & 16 Dec to 1 January
Octopus Enrichment	Giant Pacific Octopus Habitat: 2.30pm (daily)
Meet Scrooge at the Recycling Workshop	Ocean Gallery: 12.30pm, 1.30pm, 3.00pm and 4.15pm
Take Action Against Plastic Pollution & Sign Up for Guardians of the S.E.A.A. Membership	Various conservation booths: all-day
Meet & Greet:	
Mai the manta ray	Ocean Dome: 2.15pm
Sam the hammerhead shark	Ocean Gallery: 3.45pm
Mrs Claus' Bakery	Ocean Gallery: all-day



Ornate eagle ray

S.E.A. Aquarium's male ornate eagle ray arrived on 24 August 2017 and has a 1.2m wingspan and weighs 15kg. It arrived from Cairns Marine, a *WAZA-accredited supplier which provides fish, corals and ongoing care to aquariums around the world.

The ornate eagle ray is found in the Western and Eastern Indian Ocean, and the Northwest and Western Central Pacific Ocean. They are commonly seen cruising along sandy beaches in shallow waters.

The whip-like tail of an ornate eagle ray can grow longer than its wing span. Rays usually have a stinging barb on the tail, but the ornate eagle ray is not equipped with one. It possesses extremely hard teeth to crush through the shells of snails, mussels and crustaceans. This species is viviparous, giving birth to four to six live young.

*World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA), whose goal is to guide, encourage and support the zoos, aquariums and like-minded organisations of the world in animal care and welfare, environmental education and global conservation.



Mauritius triggerfish

The Mauritius triggerfish is one of the rarest species of triggerfish. Triggerfish are known for their nasty attitude and this behaviour is particularly observed around nests, where intruders, from other fishes to divers, are likely to be attacked or bitten. The Mauritius triggerfish has an unusually elongated shape in comparison to its body which makes the head appear disproportionately large.



Argentine humphead

As its name suggests, this species is known for its pronounced forehead, which is more obvious in males than females. Males are usually larger, more colourful and have longer fins. This species is a delayed mouthbrooder: the female will pick up the eggs from 24 to 36 hours after spawning and cares for the fry for about three week.



Honeycomb cowfish

The honeycomb cowfish is named for its unique honeycomb-like pattern and "horns". Honeycomb cowfish have the ability to change colour to protect themselves from predators. When swimming, they look as if they are hovering because they have no pelvic fins. They use their tube mouths to suck in small fish and crustaceans. When threatened or stressed, they excrete a toxin from specialised skin cells into the water, poisoning marine life in the vicinity.



Bat ray

The bat ray is a member of the eagle ray family. It has triangular pectoral fins (often called 'wings') shaped like the wings of a bat, hence its common name. These rays swim gracefully by flapping their pectoral fins like birds. Females can have a wingspan of six feet (1.8 m) and weigh 200 pounds (91 kg) while males are usually smaller. Bat rays have one to three venomous barbed spines at the base of their long tails, but these docile animals sting only in defence. They have a unique feeding habit, flapping their pectoral fins in the sand to expose buried prey such as clams.