

## press release

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### **S.E.A. Aquarium and Conservation International embarks on first collaborative project tagging 30 Manta Rays** *One of Southeast Asia's largest Manta Ray tagging projects to shed more light on species conservation*

**SINGAPORE, 4 SEPTEMBER 2014** – S.E.A. Aquarium and Conservation International (CI) will embark on one of Southeast Asia's largest Manta Ray tagging projects this September. This is the first joint project announced under the partnership that was inked in January. A first for CI in Singapore, the partnership will focus on conservation, public education and the support of regional projects through joint conservation events.

The team, comprised not only of staff from CI and S.E.A. Aquarium but also officials from the Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries and Indonesian Institute of Sciences, aims to tag 30 manta rays using GPS-based tags over the next 12 months in waters around Indonesia, namely Bali, Raja Ampat, Berau, and the Lesser Sunda Islands. The tagged Reef Manta Rays and Oceanic Manta Rays will allow the team to study their migratory patterns and learn more about their behaviour. The tagging project will give researchers and marine life experts more information so as to better understand the manta rays and thus manage and protect them.

Currently, there are three large manta ray fisheries in Indonesian waters and overfishing poses the greatest threat to the species, with manta gill plates fetching high prices in international markets and have been traded in significant numbers in recent years.

"Manta rays are one of the iconic marine animals at S.E.A. Aquarium and we are very excited to work with Conservation International on one of the largest tagging projects in the region. S.E.A. Aquarium has always been a strong proponent of marine conservation, education and research and we are glad to be able to leverage on Conservation International's expertise in field research to extend our conservation footprint," said Mathilde Richer De Forges, Senior Manager of Conservation at Resorts World Sentosa.

She added, "So little is known about these gentle giants and the data which these custom-made tags can potentially collect will prove very useful for the community. Over at the Aquarium, we are also driving the message of species conservation with *SEAA Wonders: Manta Rays*, a month-long public programming for all guests."

The 30 tags utilise, for the first time in a manta ray satellite tagging program, 'fast loc GPS technology' which allows for rapid, highly accurate GPS locations every time the manta rays get close to the surface. This near real-time tracking is a vast improvement from the conventional archival tags in which data is retrieved only after the tag releases from the animal after potentially months of deployment. The custom-made tags are also able to record depth and temperature.

Information obtained from these tags can show how often the manta rays come to the surface, how deep they go and the time they spend at each depth. With GPS tracking transmitting near to real-

time, the data will also show movement and migration patterns. Information collected from the tags will subsequently be utilized by the Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries to develop conservation and tourism management policies for the manta rays. The tracking information will also be displayed at the S.E.A. Aquarium.

Dr Mark Erdmann, Vice President of Asia Pacific Marine Programs for Conservation International adds, "With the support of S.E.A. Aquarium, we have customised these tags with advanced technology for use in this project. The information retrieved from the tags can also aid in developing informed policies on manta ray tourism in Indonesia or other parts of the world which have healthy populations of manta rays. There is a need to raise awareness about manta rays, and with the Aquarium's large visitor numbers, we can reach a significant percentage of the public that might not otherwise be exposed to conservation messaging."

Dr Erdmann added, "Manta rays are a truly majestic species with an estimated global tourism value of around \$140 million US dollars. We hope that our research will inform conservation plans and support tourism for the region so that these animals are increasingly recognized by all levels of society for their value alive rather than fished for their gills."

Dr Erdmann is also one of the speakers invited by S.E.A. Aquarium for September's Manta Ray conservation month, *SEAA Wonders: Manta Rays*. He will be sharing more about this project and the need to conserve these animals on 6 and 7 September 2014.

*S.E.A. Aquarium has a month of themed activities centered around Manta Rays this September, to raise awareness for these gentle giants. September's "SEAA Wonders: Manta Rays" will seek to engage guests through fun learning activities to drive the message of conservation home.*

*Key highlights include talks by experts who will share about their work with manta rays and their conservation efforts. Certified open water divers can also go for a dive in one of the world's largest aquariums and come face to face with the majestic yet elusive manta rays.*

*For more information, members of the public may refer to [www.rwsentosa.com/SEAAquarium/SEAAWonders](http://www.rwsentosa.com/SEAAquarium/SEAAWonders).*

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#### **ABOUT CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL**

Building upon a strong foundation of science, partnership and field demonstration, CI empowers societies to responsibly and sustainably care for nature, our global biodiversity, for the well-being of people. Founded in 1987, CI is headquartered in the Washington, D.C. area and employs more than 800 staff in 29 countries on six continents, and has nearly 1,000 partners around the world. For more information, please visit our website at: [www.conservation.org](http://www.conservation.org) or visit us on [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#) and [Twitter](#).

#### **ABOUT RESORTS WORLD SENTOSA**

Resorts World Sentosa (RWS), Asia's ultimate destination resort, is located on Singapore's resort island of Sentosa. Spanning 49 hectares, the resort opened in January 2010 and welcomed over 45 million visitors in its first three years of opening. RWS is home to two mega attractions - the region's first-and-only Universal Studios theme park and the Marine Life Park, which comprises the world's largest S.E.A. Aquarium and the Adventure Cove Waterpark - as well as a Maritime Experiential Museum, a casino, luxurious accommodation in six unique hotels, the Resorts World Convention Centre, celebrity chef restaurants, an award-winning destination spa and specialty retail outlets. The 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. Resorts World Sentosa was named "Best Integrated Resort" in 2011, 2012 and 2013 at the TTG Travel Awards which

recognises the best of Asia-Pacific's travel industry. Resorts World Sentosa is wholly owned by Genting Singapore, a company of the Genting Group. For more information, please visit [www.rwsentosa.com](http://www.rwsentosa.com).

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##### **Note to Editors**

High-resolution photos can be downloaded from link:

<https://ci.tandemvault.com/lightboxes/18445?tc=WbVauT822>.

