

media alert

S.E.A. Aquarium Celebrates Singapore's National Day with Two Zebra Sharks

- 'Miracle' zebra shark Vanda turned five on National Day (9 August), as aquarists celebrated her birthday with a specially-made iced seafood cake
- Testament to the aquarium's husbandry, another 'miracle' baby zebra shark, Hope, makes her debut
- Members of the public can celebrate Singapore's 56th birthday with S\$56 packages to Resorts World Sentosa's attractions this August



Vanda (left) who celebrates her fifth birthday on National Day, sports black spots against its brown body, while baby Hope (right), who recently turned seven months old, can be seen with a mixture of stripes and spots against her body. As zebra sharks (*Stegostoma fasciatum*) grow, the black-and-white stripes resembling that of a zebra, gradually fades away and they develop spots instead. **Credits: Resorts World Sentosa**

[CLICK HERE TO SEE VANDA'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION](#)

Singapore, 12 Aug 2021 – It is double the celebration and twice the fun for Resorts World Sentosa's (RWS) S.E.A. Aquarium this August as the 'miracle' zebra shark "Vanda" turned five on the same day as Singapore celebrated her birthday, while another 'miracle' baby zebra shark "Hope" makes her debut.

A shy yet inquisitive individual who is specific about what she likes to eat, Vanda was treated to a specially-made iced seafood cake – containing her favourite foods such as mackerel, tuna, crab, squid and prawn – that was put together by the aquarium's curatorial team. In addition to being a delectable treat, the iced cake also served as a form of enrichment activity for Vanda to engage her in a safe environment as she would have to manipulate the cake in order to obtain her food.

Kenneth Kwan, Aquarist at S.E.A. Aquarium said: "Vanda has been under my personal care for the past five years, and I am very happy she has grown up healthily and is now one of the stars of the aquarium. Initially, we thought Vanda would be a one-off birth, but to our pleasant surprise, sometime in early January this year, we discovered yet another egg case with a developing embryo. After caring for the

egg, Hope was hatched on 9 January 2021, and we decided to name her as such to signify a new and positive dawn for zebra sharks, which are listed as ‘Vulnerable’ in the IUCN* Red List of Threatened Species.”

Hope is bright, measures approximately 80cm in length and sports a mixture of stripes and spots against her brownish body now. Both zebra sharks are ‘miracle babies’ as aquarists strongly believe that they were hatched asexually in the absence of a male, via a natural process called parthenogenesis. This rare phenomenon is believed among experts to be an invaluable survival mechanism in the absence of a suitable male shark.

Members of the public can head to the aquarium to learn more about Vanda and spot her in the Shipwreck Habitat. For the month of August, and as part of the nation’s 56th birthday, families can purchase S\$56 deals to RWS’ various award-winning attractions. These include two one-day adult tickets to S.E.A. Aquarium or Adventure Cove Waterpark, as well as 15% discount for a one-day adult ticket to Universal Studios Singapore.

For more information on the offerings, please visit <https://www.rwsentosa.com/nationalday>.

As the health and safety of our guests and team members remain our top priority, we have implemented Trace Together-only Safe Entry at Universal Studios Singapore and S.E.A. Aquarium. Both attractions have designated entry queue lines with floor markers, as well as mandatory temperature check points. Antimicrobial coating is extensively applied at all high touch point areas, and Safe Distancing Ambassadors and crew members are actively deployed throughout the parks to ensure safe distancing measures are adhered to.

Refer to Appendix A for further information on zebra sharks.

**IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature*

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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 world-class attractions including Universal Studios Singapore, S.E.A. Aquarium, Dolphin Island and Adventure Cove Waterpark. Complementing the adventure and adrenaline of its theme parks and attractions are six unique luxury hotels, the world-class Resorts World Convention Centre and a casino. RWS offers award-winning dining experiences and exciting cuisines from around the world across its many renowned celebrity chef restaurants, establishing itself as a key player in Singapore's vibrant and diverse dining scene and a leading gourmet destination in Asia for epicureans. The integrated resort also offers world-class entertainment, from original resident productions to concerts and public shows. RWS has been named "Best Integrated Resort" since 2011 for nine 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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ABOUT S.E.A. AQUARIUM

Opened in November 2012, South East Asia Aquarium (S.E.A. Aquarium) at Resorts World Sentosa is one of the world's largest aquariums home to more than 100,000 marine animals representing 1,000 species. Featuring more than 45 diverse habitats, S.E.A. Aquarium exhibits close to 80 threatened species including the manta ray, Napoleon wrasse 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 is a member of World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA).

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EDITORS' NOTES

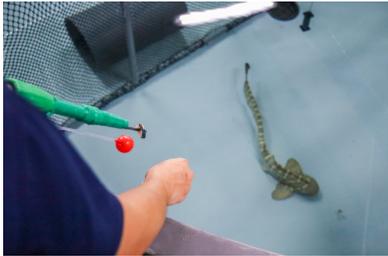
1. Please use the following photograph captions for visuals.
2. High resolution photographs can be downloaded from link: <https://app.box.com/s/mbwge8036o36r7dnvcass7yb52hc73r>
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Appendix A

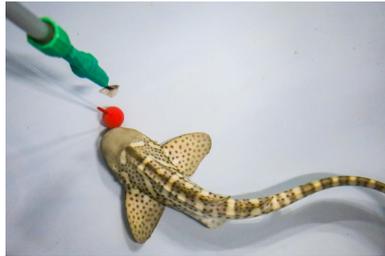
Enrichment for the well-being of zebra sharks: Recall-and-feed method

- This is a method which aquarists use to provide a form of enrichment for Vanda and Hope.
- Enrichment programmes allow aquarists to conduct physical and health checks on the zebra sharks safely and easily.



STEP 1

A visual and hearing stimuli, in the form of a floating ball (red) and ringer is attached to a long pole before being lowered into the water. Another pole, with the feed attached to the end, is simultaneously lowered into the water. The pole, when jiggled, serves as a form of **recall** for the zebra sharks to slowly approach the ball.



STEP 2

As the zebra shark approaches the target, aquarists stop moving the pole. The zebra shark will then use her nose to gently push against the ball.



STEP 3

Once the zebra shark has approached the target, aquarists then present the **feed** directly to her mouth, a form of positive reinforcement when they successfully complete the desired action.

About S.E.A. Aquarium's zebra sharks



An example of a zebra shark (*Stegostoma fasciatum*) egg case. Commonly known as 'mermaid's purse', these dark brown egg cases can measure about 17cm in length.



A 'recall-and-feed' method is used as an enrichment activity for Vanda and Hope. In this picture, Vanda responds to a visual stimuli, in the form of a ball, by approaching the ball. This indicates that she has performed the desired action.



As Vanda celebrates her fifth birthday this National Day, an iced seafood cake – consisting her favourite treats such as mackerel, squid, crab and prawn – was specially made for her. The cake also serves as an puzzle-like toy whereby Vanda can manipulate the cake in order to obtain her food as a form of enrichment



An aquarist hand-feeds Vanda her favourite mackerel in the Shipwreck Habitat.



Images of Hope taken when (left) she was five weeks old and (right) at two months old. Newborn pups are dark in colour with white bands, forming a striped pattern similar to that of a zebra. As she develops, the body takes on a lighter shade of colour as the stripes gradually fade away and spots develop on the body instead.