

DEEP CELEBRATES WORLD OCEAN DAY WITH NEW SHARKS AT THE DEEP

The Deep aquarium is celebrating World Ocean Day* by announcing the arrival of two new sharks. The stunning Zebra sharks, *Stegostoma fasciatum*, are so called because—they are born stripey, gradually turning spotty, hence their alternative name – Leopard shark. It is hoped that the sharks, a male and a female will eventually breed. They will become part of the European Studbook Captive Breeding programme.

The Deep's Science Officer, Graham Hill explains "Our two new sharks arrived from Indonesia a few weeks ago. After their flight, we cared for them in our quarantine, before carefully introducing them into our Endless Oceans tank a few days ago, where they are thriving. The male weighs 13Kg and is 1.5m in length and female weighs 14Kg and measures 1.6m. We hope they will breed when they reach sexual maturity, in several years time."

Zebra sharks are one of only three species of shark that are part of breeding exchanges organised by the European Association of Zoos and Aquariums. They are classified on the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) red list as 'vulnerable'. It is envisaged that a correctly managed programme for this species could significantly reduce the demand for wild collected specimens for public aquarium displays.

Background

Juvenile Zebra sharks, *Stegostoma fasciatum* are striped like zebras. Adults have blotches like leopards which is why this shark is also called a Leopard shark. In the wild, Zebra sharks are found in the Indo-west Pacific, from the Red Sea and East Africa to New Caledonia, north to southern Japan and south to New South Wales, Australia. Zebra sharks can squeeze into crevices to catch shellfish and small fishes.

The EAZA studbook exchange programme includes three shark species: Zebra shark, Brown shark and Blue-spotted Ribbontail ray. Blue-spotted Ribbontail rays have been successfully bred at The Deep; in April this year, our captive bred male was the first animal to enter the programme with its donation to a dutch Zoo.

*World Ocean Day – June 8th

The vastness of our oceans has made us think that they could swallow up whatever we threw at them – but it's just not the case.

Oceans cover over 70% of the Earth's surface, but less than 1% is protected. Just 2 sites in UK waters are protected, compared to 4,000 land based sites. Our oceans support an estimated ten million species, only three percent of which have been identified.

World Ocean Day is a great excuse to shout about why you love the sea and the steps we can all take to protect it! Marine Conservation Society www.mcsuk.org

EAZA the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria, represents and links more than 300 member institutions in 35 countries. Formed in 1992, EAZA's mission is to facilitate cooperation within the European zoo and aquarium community towards the goals of education, research and conservation www.eaza.net

Press Opportunity The Deep at 9.30 am on Tuesday June 8th

Press are invited to see the new sharks and interview Graham Hill. Please contact Linda Martin to make arrangements, 07751 288434.

For further information

Press: please contact Linda Martin at The Deep, 07751 288434

Public: The Deep 01482 381000 (option 3) www.thedeep.co.uk