



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SeaWorld Orlando Celebrates a Historic Milestone in Conservation with the World's Second Birth in Human Care of Critically Endangered Sawfish Pups

- *Smalltooth sawfish are critically endangered and the only species of sawfish to be found in the United States; preserving the species in human care is vital to conservation*
- *SeaWorld Orlando is the second aquarium in the world to have a successful smalltooth sawfish birth; setting a new standard for expert care and conservation efforts*
- *"It is through these opportunities that greater conservation can be achieved", boasts representatives from NOAA on this historic moment*

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ORLANDO, Fla. (Oct. 17, 2023) – SeaWorld Orlando proudly announces the birth of three smalltooth sawfish pups, marking a historic achievement in global conservation for this endangered species as the only aquarium in the United States showcasing smalltooth sawfish and the second worldwide to have a successful birth. The newborns include two females and one male, born on July 11, 2023, and each measured approximately two feet in length. Following their birth, the pups underwent a comprehensive examination, and continue to receive regular check-ups to ensure their sustained health and expected developmental progress. This milestone underscores SeaWorld's commitment to preserving biodiversity and saving species from extinction.

Dr. Joseph Gaspard, Vice President of Zoological Operations at SeaWorld Orlando said, "The birth of smalltooth sawfish at SeaWorld Orlando marks a significant achievement, as we become the second aquarium globally to have this success. This is an extraordinary success in the realm of sawfish conservation, and it is our privilege to provide world-class care for this critically endangered species. The birth of these smalltooth pups allows for a greater understanding of how to turn the tide on the declining sawfish populations and spread the message of education to our millions of guests that visit each year."

"The birth of smalltooth sawfish in captivity for just the second time, and the first within the United States, is historic. These young sawfish will provide a great opportunity for researchers and aquarists to learn more about juvenile growth and development. But equally important, this will be a chance for the public to witness and develop an understanding of these majestic creatures. It is through these opportunities that greater conservation can be achieved", says Adam Brame, Sawfish Recovery Coordinator for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA).

Despite their shark-like appearance, smalltooth sawfish are categorized as rays, showcasing gills and mouths on their undersides. Named for their saw-like rostrum, these creatures inhabit tropical seas and estuaries in the Atlantic Ocean, favoring shallow coastal waters, and occasionally venturing into freshwater river systems, notably in Florida's coastal areas. Born fully developed at a length of approximately 2 feet, the characteristic sawfish teeth are covered by a thick material that dissolves within a few days/weeks. This adaptation protects both the mother and other siblings while in utero. While these younglings continue their growth, they'll receive meticulous care from SeaWorld's Aquarium Team at the Aquarium Health Center, remaining behind the scenes as they grow and develop under world-class supervision.

Smalltooth Sawfish at SeaWorld Orlando

Two adult smalltooth sawfish reside at SeaWorld Orlando and have been housed at SeaWorld parks since the 1980s. These sawfish currently reside in the 700,000-gallon Shark Encounter main habitat and boast the title of the largest fish in the park. In late May, SeaWorld Orlando's dedicated aquarist and veterinary teams discovered through ultrasound that the female sawfish was pregnant. Recognizing the significance of this development, the female sawfish was relocated to the Aquarium Health Center, an environment where she was able to be closely monitored through the birth of the pups. SeaWorld Orlando is honored to have facilitated the pregnancy and birth in its indoor aquarium, with generated lighting and pristine saltwater conditions. This showcases the unwavering dedication of the aquarium team in providing the best care to aquatic animals, while encouraging marine life conservation and education.

Conservation of Sawfish

Smalltooth sawfish are critically endangered, being the first marine fish to be protected by the Endangered Species Act twenty years ago, in 2003, following a significant decline in population from habitat loss and unintended capture by fishers. This is the only species of sawfish to be found in United States waters, making the birth of the three pups even more meaningful. Entities that house sawfish, including SeaWorld Orlando, have a serious interest in gaining a greater understanding of all sawfish reproduction to strengthen their impact in helping the declining population. The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) has created the Sawfish Species Survival Plan to help facilitate the future reproductive success of these animals.

SeaWorld is committed to educating and inspiring the next generation of conservationists through its park experiences. It is also committed to animal conservation outside its parks

through partnerships and the SeaWorld Conservation Fund that has donated more than \$20 million to research conservation projects.

Guests visiting the park can also play an important role in conservation. A portion of every visit goes directly toward SeaWorld rescue, rehabilitation, and marine animal conservation efforts. Guests can also donate in the park or online to the [SeaWorld Conservation Fund](#) that supports important third-party conservation research.

About SeaWorld

SeaWorld is a leading marine life theme park and accredited zoo and aquarium that provides experiences that matter while educating and inspiring guests of all ages to care about marine life. Welcoming millions of guests every year, the parks offer fun and enriching experiences from up-close animal encounters and year-round educational programs to award-winning marine-life themed rides and attractions, special events and exciting entertainment. For more than 60 years SeaWorld has advanced the conservation of marine life in and outside its parks through science, education, and exceptional animal care that is Humane Certified by American Humane and accredited by the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. SeaWorld is one of the largest marine animal rescue organizations in the world, helping more than 40,000 animals to date. The SeaWorld Conservation Fund, a non-profit foundation established in 2003, has provided more than \$20 million to nearly 1,400 organizations to advance critical research on every continent. A portion of park proceeds goes toward supporting these longstanding conservation commitments. SeaWorld parks are in Orlando, San Antonio, San Diego and Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE). SeaWorld is part of the SeaWorld Entertainment (NYSE: SEAS) portfolio of theme park brands. For more information, visit us at [SeaWorld.com](#).

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