

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Krystle Alcain
Telephone: 808.270.7084
E-mail: kalcain@mauiocceancenter.com

MAUI OCEAN CENTER: EXHIBIT DESCRIPTIONS

MA‘ALAEA, MAUI, HI – From the smallest coral polyp to the seven-foot sandbar shark, the intricate wonders of Hawaii’s ocean are showcased in over 60 indoor and outdoor exhibits at Maui Ocean Center. Each exhibit features marine animals living in habitats closely replicate their own natural environment.

Exhibit: The Living Reef

Hawaii’s coral reefs comprise more than 80% of the reefs in the United States.

The Living Reef realistically portrays the wonder of Hawaii’s coral reefs from the rocky surge zone to the edge of the deep reef. Visitors get a chance to see rarely encountered marine creatures: moray eels, octopus, lobsters, sea horses, nocturnal fish and much more! All live coral is collected with special permits from the State of Hawaii.

Exhibit: Coral Reefs

An in-depth understanding of how coral reproduces, thrives, and influences our lives.

The cultural and ecological significance of Hawaii’s coral reefs are brought to life in this interactive exhibit featuring live coral specimens, informational panels and stunning images. Visitors may also work the coral spawning model and look upon the remains of a 125,000 year-old coral skeleton.

Exhibit: Behind-the-Scenes

The Aquarium operates on a semi-open seawater system, pumping ocean water through each exhibit.

This exhibit gives visitors a sneak-peek ‘through the walls’ at Maui Ocean Center with a diagram of the Aquarium’s open seawater system, using water pumped from the ocean instead of manufacturing artificial saltwater, and explains all of the elements that go into creating an exhibit.

Exhibit: Turtle Lagoon

In Hawaiian, green sea turtles are called honu.

Green sea turtles eat so much algae and sea grasses that it turns their fat layer green, hence the common name. All sea turtles are protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. At Maui Ocean Center, Hawaii’s green sea turtles are part of a hatch-and-release program and will eventually be released in the wild. We have two different age ranges of Green sea turtles for you to observe.

Exhibit: Hammerhead Harbor

Hammerhead sharks use electroreceptive organs to search out prey buried in the sand.

All sharks and rays have electroreceptive organs which can detect electrical pulses from living animals. Hammerhead sharks have their sensory organs spread out over a wider distance on their uniquely shaped head, likely giving them an advantage in finding prey. Adult scalloped hammerhead sharks live offshore, but come in to shallow, generally murky water, to give birth.

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Exhibit: The Tide Pool

Sea stars, sea urchins and sea cucumbers are close relatives.

Constructed in the form of an ocean rock pool, the Tide Pool holds a variety of harmless marine animals including sea stars, urchins and sea cucumbers. Under the guidance of an Ocean Naturalist, visitors are welcome to touch the inhabitants of this display.

Exhibit: Marine Mammal Discovery Center

Interpretive displays and games on Hawaii's marine mammals.

The Marine Mammal Discovery Center features interactive displays and games on several species found in Hawaii's waters such as dolphins, whales, and the state's most endangered marine mammal, the endemic Hawaiian monk seal. This 3,000-square foot exhibit includes educational graphic boards, life-size models of a monk seal mother and pup in a realistic beach setting, and the interactive Dolphin Playpod. Built low to the ground, the Playpod is designed for ages 3 and up and features colorful displays that teach concepts of dolphin biology in simple ways. You also can experience the bubble net exhibit, an interactive representation of a feeding strategy used by humpback whales to capture food by surrounding their prey with a curtain of bubbles.

Exhibit: Hawaiians and the Sea

Captain James Cook considered Hawaiians to be the world's greatest ecologists.

The ancient Hawaiians were expert navigators, using the stars as guides and traveling in their handmade, hydrodynamically perfected vessels. These proficient fishermen were also masters at designing and building aquaculture systems that provided food without depleting the island's natural resources. The close relationship between the ancient Hawaiians and the Pacific Ocean is told in this inspiring exhibit.

Exhibit: Sea Jelly Gallery

Sea Jellies become living art in these incredible displays.

Perhaps the most soothing exhibit, sea jellies appear to dance before your eyes in a stunning floor-to-ceiling cylinder. Comprised of more than 95% water, sea jellies have no brain or other specialized organs, only a loose net of nerves and muscles. The pumping of the bell prevents the jellies from sinking and increases the likelihood of it capturing prey in its stinging tentacles.

Exhibit: The Open Ocean

The vast open ocean is called the "pelagic realm."

The Open Ocean is home to graceful stingrays and large, fast-swimming fishes like sharks and jacks, all of which co-exist in a 750,000-gallon salt-water aquarium, the largest in the state. A 54-foot-long clear acrylic tunnel transports visitors through this pelagic realm providing a 240-degree view of nearly 2,000 fishes, while stingrays slide overhead and sharks look visitors in the eye. Certified SCUBA divers age 15 and older may enter this exhibit as part of the Shark Dive Maui™ program.

The mission of Maui Ocean Center is to foster understanding, wonder and respect for Hawaii's marine life. Maui Ocean Center was named "Top 25 Best Aquariums in the U.S." and inducted into "Certificate of Excellence Hall of Fame 2015" by TripAdvisor, "Top-Rated Attraction in Hawaii" by Zagat Survey US Family Travel Guide, "Leader In Responsible Tourism" on the Top 100 Blue List by Islands Magazine, and "Best Land Activity" in 2008, 2009, 2011 by the readers of The Maui News. Open daily from 9 to 5, and from 9 to 6 in July and August. For more information please contact the Maui Ocean Center: 192 Ma'alaea Road; Ma'alaea, HI 96793; telephone (808) 270-7000, facsimile (808) 270-7070, e-mail: info@mauiocenter.com or visit www.mauiocenter.com.