

Husbandry Update for January 30, 2012

River Journey

Seahorses

We received another shipment of wild-caught alligator pipefish this week. Among this batch of 10 pipefish were two pregnant males, one of which delivered a few babies upon arrival. Aquarists have set up a separate holding area for the newborns. They are feeding the newborns generous helpings of rotifers, three times each day, in hopes that these little ones reach adulthood. Wild-caught mysid shrimp were ordered and received the same day for feeding to the new alligator pipefish until they begin eating frozen food. Among these mysid shrimp was another type of baby pipefish! This one has been put in the nursery with the other baby alligator pipefish in hopes of raising this little guy as well. It has been quite the treat this week to get so many surprise baby pipefish.

Discovery Hall

The feather blennies in the *Estuary* exhibit in *Discovery Hall* have all established their own territories. The larger shells seem to be the prized spots, although the rocks in the back are apparently suitable as well. The blennies can be seen chasing away other fish that dare to come near their respective homes. Then they quickly retreat to the safety of their shell or rocks.

Rivers of the World

The male Mandarin duck is getting along well with the female on exhibit. He is about a year old and has definitely livened things up in the exhibit. The female is several years older than the male and is adjusting to this dashing duck. He is still learning how to deal with pushy turtles as they like to push the ducks off the log perch. He is in gorgeous plumage right now and his other sail feather is growing in. Learn more about this gorgeous bird and a rather elegant snowy egret in the Aquarium blog: <http://tennesseeaquarium.blogspot.com/2012/01/new-birds-elegant-egret-dashing-duck.html>



Photo by T. Benson.....(the male has two legs, he is just holding one up!)

Did you know ???

There are three basic categories in which all types of aquarium filtration can be grouped: mechanical, biological and chemical. They will all be covered over the coming weeks.

Mechanical filtration is exactly what it sounds like: a device that physically removes particles from the water. This can take many forms such as sponges, pleated filters, filter socks, micron pads or sand filters, to name a few. It serves to remove waste from the water column before it has a chance to decay and pollute the water. Mechanical filters must be cleaned fairly often to prevent debris from breaking down in the device, which would lead to tank pollution. Many of our exhibits employ filter socks that are changed every two to seven days. This type of filtration keeps the exhibit water clear.

Ocean Journey

Boneless Beauties



We have had a streak of molting Japanese spider crabs. Two successful molts have been discovered recently. One was discovered prior to opening on Jan. 18, the second was found on Friday, Jan. 20. Crustaceans' continual growth is impossible without molting, due to their hard exoskeletons. Molting is necessary for growth but it's an exhausting, and at times, deadly process. Freshly molted animals are very vulnerable until their shell hardens or "tans." Seafood lovers may be familiar with this stage in blue crabs. A soft-shelled crab is a crab that has just molted but has not yet tanned.

photo by K. Estes

Did you know ???

True jellyfish are members of the subphylum Medusozoa. This group can be further divided into the classes Cubozoa, Scyphozoa, Hydrozoa, Staurozoa, and Polypodiozoa.

Cubozoans are better known as "box jellyfish" and are notorious for their strong and potentially deadly stings.

Scyphozoan jellyfish are the most widely represented in aquariums and include sea nettles, moon jellies, upside down jellies and many others.

Hydrozoans are perhaps the most diverse in number (over 1,000 known species) and in appearance. In our collection, this class is represented by the umbrella jellyfish and the elegant jellyfish. Other well known members include Portuguese man-of-war, fire corals, and freshwater jellyfish.

Staurozoans, also referred to as "stalked jellyfish" or "sitting jellyfish," are tiny but beautiful medusa that attach to substrate using a stalked appendage that functions like a suction cup.

Polypodiozoan is represented by a single species of parasite that infects the eggs of sturgeon and paddlefish. It is the only known intracellular cnidarian parasite.