

Explore Ocean Life on a Whole New Level with a New Birch Aquarium Exhibit

Sea of Genes opens November 19 in Scripps Explorers Gallery

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Transport yourself to the tiny world of molecules in Birch Aquarium's newest exhibit, *Sea of Genes*, opening on November 19 at the Birch Aquarium at Scripps, the exploration center for Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Based on the latest genomics research, *Sea of Genes* is your opportunity to explore ocean life on a whole new level. In the process, you may just learn something about yourself!

Visitors will travel to the genomic frontier for an inside look at some of the amazing discoveries being made in this new area of research. Your journey begins with DNA—the master molecule that is the key to all life. Through the exhibit's interactive displays you'll discover how to read DNA's secret code and find out how six feet of DNA fits in each of your body's tiny cells. Also, learn how the genome of a pufferfish is helping scientists unravel the mysteries of the human genome and probe the genetic secrets of some of the ocean's oldest and tiniest forms of life.

Guests can test their rhythm and dance out a DNA sequence in "The Codon Hoedown," an educational game similar to "Dance Dance Revolution," the popular video game in which players move their feet to a set pattern, stepping in time to the general rhythm or beat of a song.

Sea of Genes will take visitors inside the labs of the Scripps Genome Center, recently unveiled at Scripps Institution of Oceanography. The Scripps Genome Center will address important ocean issues as well as those related to human health, the environment and other areas. Scripps scientists are involved in mapping the genomes of a variety of marine organisms and will use this information to understand how the organisms survive and interact with their environment.

Public awareness of genetics skyrocketed due to the Human Genome Project. The complete sequencing of the human genome—or genetic blueprint—after 13 years of intensive work, was a recent major scientific breakthrough. Important benefits for human health will be derived in the years ahead as scientists learn more about the thousands of instructions, called genes, contained in the genome, and the role they play in diseases like cancer, arthritis, and cystic fibrosis. *Sea of Genes* opens Saturday, November 19, when aquarium visitors can enjoy DNA Family Day, presented in conjunction with Salk Institute for Biological Studies. This special Family Day program is from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., includes the opportunity to extract DNA from wheat germ and meet Scripps researchers and special guests from Salk Institute.

This exhibit is funded in part by a grant from the National Science Foundation to Scripps marine biologist Brian Palenik and co-investigator Ian Paulsen at The Institute for Genomic Research in Rockville, Maryland. Palenik, his graduate students and Paulsen worked with Birch Aquarium's exhibit team to develop *Sea of Genes* and bring the latest marine genomics research to the public.

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