

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



guests visited Georgia Aquarium



and external

horned puffin chick hatched. Skye hatched in August to parents Stormy and Elmo

total air quality testing sites run annually throughout

total annual water quality tests run

Through monthly, quarterly and yearly inspections and overhauls, our Dive Maintenance team has maintained

pieces of equipment in rotation for daily staff, volunteer and field work

through our Sleep Under the Seas program



dear friends,

2023 was a year of many accomplishments. Our teams achieved so much, and I'm proud to share these big endeavors with you, our amazing donors.

The launch of Resident Pass allowed more locals than ever to experience all the new things the Aquarium has to offer through the year, for the price of just one day. This pass was a massive success and will continue to be a way for us to engage with our local community for years to come.

One of our core goals as an aquarium is to continually offer new experiences, new animals, and new educational opportunities. Some of these new and enhanced experiences included our brand new, immersive Halloween programming, Haunted Seas, as well as Holidays at Georgia Aquarium presented by Norfolk Southern. We also were proud to continue renovations on River Scout in a gallery refresh that brought new animals, theming and messaging throughout the space. These renovations culminated in the unveiling of a big, bright new piranha habitat that can change water level to reflect the seasons.

The animal teams were hard at work, as usual, in 2023. Our Sea Otter Encounter Program relaunched after safety concerns from the pandemic in 2020 led staff to keep certain animals from being exposed to COVID by guests. Our Mammal and

Bird Team along with the Veterinary Team worked with many of our animals, including the sea otters, to be able to vaccinate them and allow our Encounter Programs to come back for quests to experience. The Mammal and Bird staff also accomplished a new puffin and chick training program that they were able to present to colleagues at the International Marine Animal Trainers Association (IMATA) Conference, Staff members on the Fish and Invertebrates team helped with rescue and relief efforts for manatees and many stranded sea turtles. Through their efforts, this year alone we were able to house, rehabilitate, and release two manatees and eight turtles.

As always, we thank you for your continued support. As donors, you are directly involved with all of our accomplishments, and I invite you to look join me in proudly reflecting on an amazing year at Georgia Aquarium.

President & CEO Georgia Aquarium



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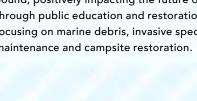
true blue

Georgia Aquarium has continued our partnership with Mission Blue to help safeguard vital marine ecosystems and is proud that in 2023, Prince William Sound became the first Hope Spot in Alaska. Mission Blue advocates for public awareness and support of a network of marine protected areas, named Hope Spots, scientifically identified as areas critical to ocean health.

Prince William Sound encompasses 3,500 miles of coastline including fjords, islands and over 150 glaciers, serving as a connector between inland rivers and bays to the Gulf of Alaska and ultimately the North Pacific Ocean. The area is home to five species of salmon, migrating populations of humpback whales, pods of killer whales, brown and black bears, over 220 species of birds and much more.

Mission Blue has named Prince William Sound a Hope Spot in honor of its resilience, innovation and community. In the past, the area has been impacted by logging and mining activities, whaling, fur trades and the 1989 Exxon Valdez Oil Spill. Some marine mammal and seabird populations are still recovering.

Prince William Sound Stewardship Foundation (PWSSF) and Georgia Aquarium are recognized as Hope Spot Champions for this area. Together, both organizations are working to conserve, restore and encourage responsible stewardship of Prince William Sound, positively impacting the future of the area through public education and restoration projects focusing on marine debris, invasive species, trail maintenance and campsite restoration.















Conservation Status



"We are honored and delighted for Prince William Sound to join the esteemed network of Mission Blue Hope Spots as the first one in the state of Alaska. We hope this designation will encourage stewardship as well as even greater community engagement across the Sound."

Dr. Charla Hughes, Executive Director of the Prince William Sound Stewardship Foundation



MILES OF COASTLINE

SEA CHANGE : 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

nurturing neighbors

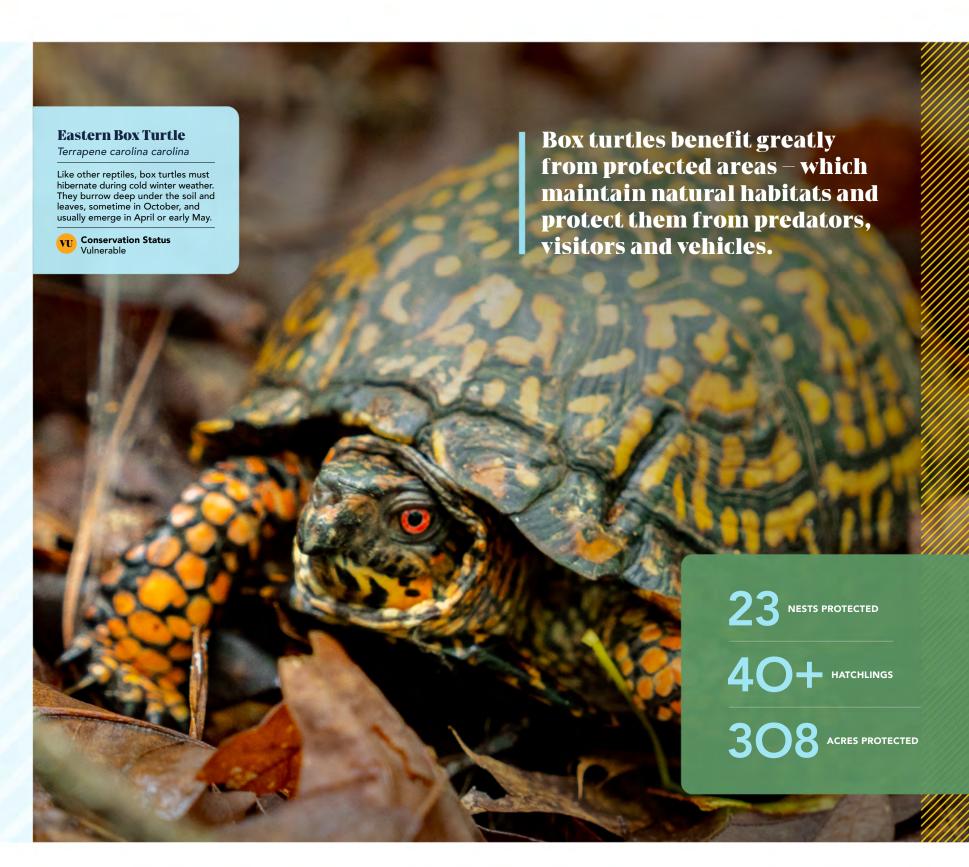
A collaborative conservation effort between Georgia Aquarium staff and the **Southern Conservation Trust** resulted in a record box turtle nesting season at **The Ridge Nature Preserve** in Fayetteville, GA. Protecting 23 delicate box turtle nests in the area led to more than 40 hatchlings in 2023—double the hatchlings from the previous year. Georgia Aquarium aquarists provided their knowledge and assistance in safeguarding nests and recording data.

Eastern box turtles are considered "Vulnerable" on the IUCN Red List with habitat loss, traffic incidents and collection for the pet trade as large contributing factors. The preserve is home to a dense population of these turtles and data collected will provide insight into the local environment's health and help researchers determine practices that will help conserve this local species in other areas.











Two senior trainers from Georgia Aquarium's Mammals and Birds team visited South Africa in 2023 to assist in the rehabilitation of African penguins. Staff spent two weeks working at the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB), a non-profit organization whose primary objective is to reverse the decline of seabird populations through the rescue, rehabilitation and release of ill, injured, abandoned and oiled seabirds.



Georgia Aquarium has been a proud partner of SANCCOB for over a decade, frequently sending staff to South Africa, as well as providing funding for research projects and rehabilitation efforts. Mammals and Birds team members are passionate about our partnership and highlight these efforts in our Penguin Encounter Programs.

During their time in South Africa, Georgia Aquarium trainers participated in all aspects of penguin rehabilitation including feeding, medication administration, cleaning, diet preparation, chick rearing and release preparation. All of which continues to develop skills that are beneficial to our care of African penguins at Georgia Aquarium. Additionally, Georgia Aquarium staff participated in releasing fully rehabilitated penguins back into their natural environment.



African Penguin

Spheniscus demersus

After hatching, chicks are fed by the parents for up to 3 months, until they molt their down and grow their juvenile feathers. This process is called fledging.





population protection

The beluga whales at Georgia Aquarium and their trainers continue to support important metabolic research in partnership with scientists at University of California, Santa Cruz. Trainers from our Mammals and Birds team have trained the belugas to rest in a metabolic dome to measure oxygen consumption.





These levels are measured at rest with the whales under the dome for 10-13 minutes and then measured again after three minutes of activity. This is a major accomplishment in animal husbandry as testing must be done fasted (no food prior or during) and many other elements must be considered to successfully teach the whales these specific behaviors.

Information gathered during these tests then translates into the energetic requirements and metabolic needs of an adult beluga whale. From there, scientists can determine a beluga's needed fish consumption on a daily, weekly, monthly and even yearly basis. Other factors to consider include the energetic cost of noise pollution, boat traffic and other human-made impacts that might cause whales to dive or swim more than usual. Understanding these energetic requirements is critical to evaluating if prey availability is sufficient for survival for beluga populations and the Critically Endangered population in Cook Inlet, Alaska, in particular.

The belugas at Georgia Aquarium continue to serve as ambassadors for their species and this research contributes to conservation efforts of cetaceans around the world.

Beluga Whale

Delphinapterus leucas

Belugas are sometimes called "sea canaries" due to the extensive variety of sounds they can make.



LC Conservation Status Least Concern*

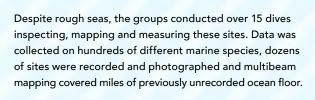
reef relief

Georgia Aquarium along with other research organizations participated in a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) expedition in June 2023. The team set out on a NOAA research vessel to dive in and around Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary, off the coast of Georgia. The goals of the mission were to map the ocean floor and collect data on the abundance, diversity and distribution of fishes, invertebrates and any structures at the dive sites.









The team from Georgia Aquarium assisted in many of the dives with a focus on species identification, ledge measurements and recordings, debris collection and photography. Lauren Rotsted and Jeff Odom from the Dive Operations team and Kat McFadden from the Fish and Invertebrates team lent their knowledge to the expedition by providing underwater species identification, recording techniques and dive safety expertise.



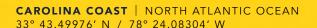
shark savvy

Two members of Georgia Aquarium's Training
Department traveled to Jamaica in September 2023
to facilitate shark conservation training workshops
in partnership with the Sandals Foundation and the
University of West Indies–Discovery Bay Marine
Lab. Reaching over 140 individuals, these training
sessions focused on the importance of sharks to their
marine environment, providing conservation material
and education on sharks typically found in Jamaican
waters. The goal was to debunk myths about sharks
and to expand education to enable these individuals
to be trainers themselves. Participants ranged from
individuals at academic institutions and government
agencies to local fishermen, Sandals resort
employees and even a local primary school.









mapping movements

Researchers from Georgia Aquarium and Ripley's Aquariums embarked on a partnership to deploy acoustic telemetry tags to understand how animals in the southernmost part of their range use their habitat along the Eastern Seaboard. Sand tiger sharks were tagged in Bennet's Point, South Carolina and Nags Head, North Carolina in the spring of 2023 in collaboration with colleagues at the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. Detection data revealed animals to have traveled as far south as Florida to as far north as Rhode Island across the year. Further efforts will continue to tag more animals across different age classes.



In partnership with the Coral Restoration
Foundation (CRF), Georgia Aquarium was able
to help design and fabricate the "Coral Bus", a
cutting-edge aquarium trailer system designed to
transport nursery-raised corals safely to their new
homes within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

Made possible through the support from the National Marine Sanctuary
Foundation, the Coral Bus is a first-of-its-kind coral transport technology.
The Coral Bus closely replicates the open ocean conditions to which the corals are already acclimated and enables practitioners to monitor and regulate water temperature, pH, filtration and water flow to ensure the well-being of corals during transport. The goal is to minimize any stress experienced by these fragile animals while they are on the move. Removing as many stressors as possible gives these endangered animals an even better chance of survival in the wild.





"We were thrilled to have contributed to the completion of the Coral Bus, which will give CRF the ability to expand their impactful work preserving our ocean's coral reefs."

Steve Hartter, Associate Curator of Fish and Invertebrates, Georgia Aquarium



14 GEORGIA AQUARIUM

island vibes

In 2023, Georgia Aquarium announced a new presenting partner, Margaritaville Vacation Club by Wyndham, for our Dolphin Coast Gallery.

In partnership, the dolphin corridor received an island-themed makeover as well as a brand-new coastal bird exhibit including roseate spoonbills and scarlet ibis.

Featuring both aquatic and arboreal elements, this is the first habitat of its kind at Georgia Aquarium. The exhibit educates guests on the importance, diversity and delicate balance of coastal ecosystems and provides an up-close look at these colorful and gregarious birds.

Margaritaville Vacation Club by Wyndham furthered their commitment to the city of Atlanta by supporting Georgia Aquarium's Sponsored Education Admissions (SEA) Program, providing Aquarium admission to close to 1,000 additional students at Title I schools.







16 XG GEORGIA AQUARIUM



SAINT HELENA | SOUTH ATLANTIC OCEAN 15° 56.84487′ S / 5° 41.99349′ W

beacon of hope

Georgia Aquarium has worked alongside Mission Blue to recognize St. Helena as a Mission Blue Hope Spot, an area scientifically identified as critical to ocean health.

St. Helena National Trust and Georgia Aquarium are recognized as the Hope Spot Champions. Georgia Aquarium has been working together with Helena Bennett, Director of the St. Helena National Trust and the St. Helena Government over the last 10 years to implement marine science and monitoring programs for the island. Mission Blue has named St. Helena Island a Hope Spot in honor of the island's ongoing initiatives to manage and monitor its marine environment and to also grow a sustainable economy.

St. Helena is a remote island in the middle of the South Atlantic Ocean, home to 4,439 residents and measuring 47 square miles. The island boasts an incredible level of biodiversity with more than 800 species calling the area home including 18 endemic species. The ocean habitat around the island is legally designated a marine protected area and encompasses the only known whale shark breeding location in the world. Georgia Aquarium researchers have made multiple expeditions to St. Helena since 2014 to study whale shark populations using techniques discovered in the aquarium setting.

The local government has published a new Marine Management Plan (MMP) for 2023-2027 facilitating continuous community engagement, fostering ocean stewardship and sustained environmental consciousness across the island. The Hope Spot recognition and dedication of the local community is vital to protecting the incredible environment of St. Helena for years to come



smarts, with heart

Georgia Aquarium's outreach and education programs enrich our community and inspire the next generation.

RIVERS TO REEFS

2023 brought the revitalization of a teacher professional development opportunity for 14 teachers from Title I schools. Rivers to Reefs is a weeklong workshop that gives teachers hands-on experience to create better stewards and advocates for the waterways in their communities. Beginning at Georgia Aquarium to learn about water in Metro Atlanta, the group then set off to follow the Altamaha River watershed. Educators created connections between inland rivers and offshore habitats bringing back all that they learned into their classroom curriculum.



Spotted Eagle Ray

Aetobatus narinari

The spotted eagle ray has a distinctive pattern of small whitish spots across the back. This ray frequently forms large schools during the non-breeding season.



EN Conservation Status Endangered



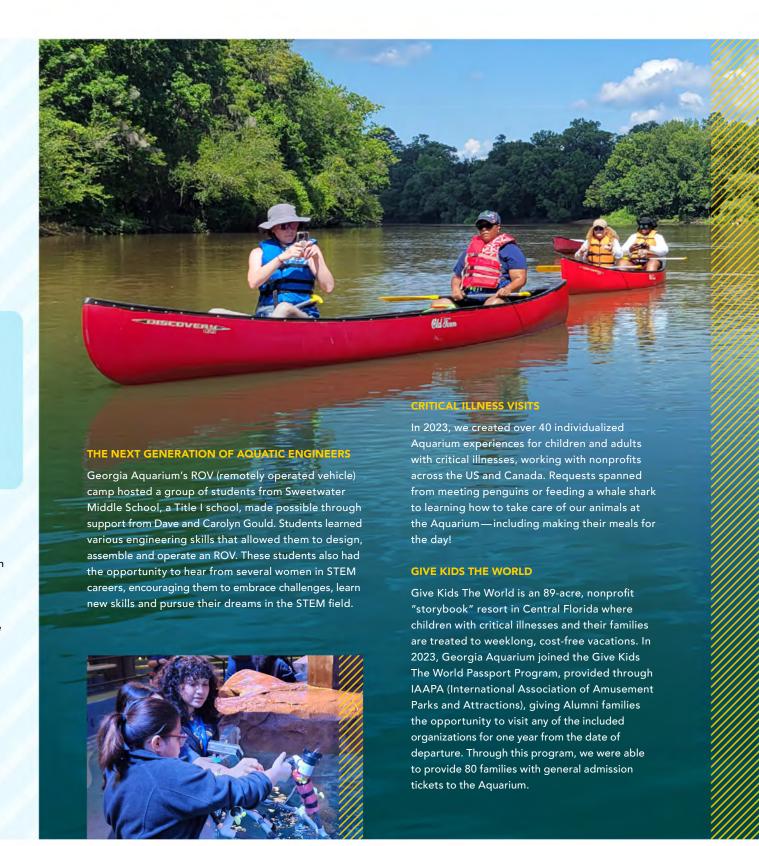


NOAA OCEAN GUARDIAN SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

An Ocean Guardian School is committed to the protection and conservation of its local watersheds, the world's ocean and special ocean areas, like national marine sanctuaries. Schools submit a project proposal for funding and participation and carry out hands-on school-wide or community-based stewardship projects. Georgia Aquarium has partnered with NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries to identify program participants and help implement project goals. With support from Georgia-Pacific, McCleskey Middle School in Marietta and Oglethorpe Charter School in Savannah will be the first NOAA Ocean Guardian Schools in the state of Georgia.

CLAYTON COUNTY PARTNERSHIP

Georgia Aquarium has partnered with the Clayton County school district to implement a K-12 Marine Science Learning Pathway in their public school system. The goal is to provide students who are underrepresented in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) with access and opportunity to explore careers in Marine Science.



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turning the tide

During the summer of 2023, Georgia Aquarium sent seven employees from our **Pinniped** team to assist rescue staff at **The Marine Mammal Center** during the domoic acid crisis in California.









produced by harmful algal bloom events, sometimes known as "red tide", that thrive in unusually warm waters off the West Coast. These conditions have unfortunately become increasingly more frequent due to climate change impacts.

The neurotoxin accumulates in smaller fish, which are then eaten by marine mammals in significant quantities. Sea lions repeatedly exposed to the toxin can suffer long-lasting and serious effects. Domoic acid attacks the brain and heart causing seizures, heart failure and, if left untreated, can cause permanent brain damage.

The Marine Mammal Center attempts to rescue, rehabilitate and release animals in need, including ones exposed to domoic acid. Georgia Aquarium staff contributed knowledge of pinniped behavior and handling skills while also learning about the rescue and rehabilitation processes.

Most of the animals treated for domoic acid toxicity are California sea lions, but seals and other marine mammals like cetaceans can be impacted as well. Animals that are assisted by the rescue team are provided fluids to help flush the toxins as well as fish sources free of domoic acid and, in some cases, anti-seizure medications. Once the animals are healthy enough, they are returned to the ocean.

Georgia Aquarium is a proud partner of The Marine Mammal Center and is committed to helping rescue animals in need.





Lockheed Martin is another proud patron of our Military Salute Program, supporting both the Veterans Immersion Program (VIP) and Gold Star Family Days.

VETERANS IMMERSION PROGRAM (VIP)

Over 500 veterans participated in our swim or dive programs in our Ocean Voyager Built by The Home Depot gallery. More than 80 non-military individuals were able to participate as well, including groups from both Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and Shepherd Center.

GOLD STAR FAMILY DAYS

Georgia Aquarium hosted three Gold Star Family Days throughout 2023 that focused on serving families that have lost a loved one in service to this country. Over 360 Gold Star Family members visited the Aquarium, participating in animal encounters, ceremonies, flag presentations and meals.

RE-ENLISTMENTS

For the first time since the pandemic, in-water Military Re-Enlistments were brought back with the help of our Dive Operations, Dive Immersion and Zoological Operations teams.











MILITARY MONDAYS

Provided free admission for veterans and active-duty military personnel and discounted admission for their families on select Mondays in May, November and December, totaling close to 6,500 individuals.

VETERANS FIELD IMMERSION PROGRAM

Providing veterans with meaningful and fulfilling experiences in the field, Georgia Aquarium took 24 veterans on three field dive trips to Key Largo and Jupiter, Florida where the focus was education, conservation and service. Partnering with both the Coral Restoration Foundation and Loggerhead Marine Life Center, veterans engaged in the therapeutic nature of the ocean along with being a part of a mission greater than themselves. Veterans participated in service projects above and below the ocean's surface.

sustaining species

The StAR Project, led by the West Papua Provincial Government and the Research and Innovation Agency of Indonesia, seeks to reestablish a healthy population of zebra sharks by bringing aquarium-bred egg cases to hatcheries in protected areas of Raja Ampat. There, the sharks will be properly reared and tagged for release.

Five zebra shark pups from the project were released into Indonesian waters in 2023 and Georgia Aquarium was also able to contribute our first two embryos. The proven success of breeding paired with the husbandry expertise of accredited aquariums, like Georgia Aquarium, is critical in the recovery of this species.









SAUNDERS REEF | SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN 21° 0.39558' S / 149° 33.72504' E

expedition down under

Georgia Aquarium participated in an expedition led by Biopixel to the far northern part of the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. 13 researchers from seven different organizations contributed to the goal of tagging sharks and rays in the area to better understand habitat and migration seasonality. The group was able to successfully tag:

WHALE SHARKS 3 FEMALES 11 MALES

BULL SHARK

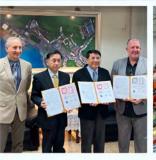
OCEANIC MANTA 5 TIGER SHARKS

stealth science

In 2023 Georgia Aquarium signed a ten-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with National Taiwan Ocean University (NTOU) and the Taiwan Fisheries Research Institute to develop shark and ray science and conservation programs in Taiwan's coastal waters.

These programs include the creation of a robust coastal acoustic array network to track any radio-tagged animals in waters around Taiwan and provide funding to academic and local fishers to tag sharks and rays, including whale sharks. Dr. Kady Lyons, Research Scientist at Georgia Aquarium also carried out a shark tagging workshop at NTOU for graduate students, faculty and local fishers to help carry out field research and learn where sharks are found around the island.







BOWMOUTH GUITARFISH

Georgia Aquarium became home to three young Critically Endangered bowmouth guitarfish, born in Taiwan after their mother was inadvertently caught in a fishing net. Bowmouth guitarfish are visually striking animals and are sought after in the fish market trade. To protect these pups from being caught in the future, it was determined they should go to facilities that have experience caring for them and that could contribute to scientific understanding to help their dwindling population numbers through research.

Once they are large enough, these pups will be introduced to our Ocean Voyager Built by The Home Depot gallery where three adult bowmouth guitarfish currently reside.

"This is an extremely rare species, and thanks to our conservation partners in Taiwan we were able to bring them to Atlanta and contribute not only to their individual protection but open up future conservation possibilities for reproduction of these endangered animals." Chris Coco, Vice President of Aquatic Sustainability at Georgia Aquarium.



Note: The statements shown below are condensed versions of our audited financial statements and do not include footnote disclosures. Complete audited financial statements are available upon request.

2023 income statement

REVENUE

Admissions	\$127,136,944
Commissions & Events	\$17,796,011
Fundraising & Memberships	\$9,939,918
In-Kind Contributions	\$2,748,202
Total Revenue	\$157,621,075
EXPENSES	
Program Services	\$56,522,880
Support Services	\$30,159,490
Fundraising & Advertising	\$6,683,303
Other Expenses	\$20,639,642
Total Expenses	\$114,005,315
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	\$43,615,760

2023 balance sheet

ASSETS

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$591,152,556
Total Net Assets	\$505,278,716
With Donor Restrictions	\$25,047,248
Without Donor Restrictions	\$480,231,468
NET ASSETS	
Total Liabilities	\$85,873,840
Other, Operating Lease Liabilities	\$1,215,837
Debt	\$52,750,226
Deferred Revenue	\$10,958,514
Accounts Payable & Accrued Expenses	\$20,949,263
LIABILITIES	
Total Assets	\$591,152,556
Property, Plant & Equipment, Net	\$428,586,018
Receivables	\$12,961,316
Prepaids & Other	\$2,901,425
Cash & Investments	\$146,703,797

2023 presenting SPONSOFS

Our Presenting Sponsors represent Georgia Aquarium's highest level of sponsorship. These companies help support our mission to inspire awareness and preservation of our ocean and aquatic animals worldwide.





MARGARITAVILLE VACATION CLUB, BY WYNDHAM





2023 board of directors

Our Board of Directors is made up of a group of dedicated individuals who have brought their impressive combined experience into one group. Together, they are committed to steering Georgia Aquarium into the future.

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James Y. Kerr, II
Kirk Kinsell
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thank vou to our

As a 501(c)3 nonprofit, we rely on the support of our community to ensure that we can continue our groundbreaking research initiatives, conservation efforts, educational programs, and community partnerships. By supporting Georgia Aquarium, these generous donors allow us to make a positive impact on the health and welfare of aquatic life from around the globe and remain at the forefront of aquatic science.

🕹 acknowledges members of Georgia Aquarium's Anchor Society, a philanthropic membership.

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♣ Kozak Family Fund at The Chicago Community Foundation John and Karla Kreideweis

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& Ms. Jade Lintott & Daniel Liu and Olivia Clark

Lockheed Martin Mr. Roland Loe

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