

From Small Fry to Big Fish – highlights

1995

- The city of Cape Town, the original maritime gateway to southern Africa, is an obvious site for a world-class aquarium. Few places in the world are in a more favourable position to feature the rich diversity of life found in two oceans, particularly in contrasting oceans such as the Indian and Atlantic. After eight years of research and 18 months of construction, the long-awaited Two Oceans Aquarium opens on 13 November 1995.
- Longfin tuna *Thunnus alalunga* and snoek *Thysites atun* are displayed for the first time in the world.

1996

- The Minister of Trade and Industry, Trevor Manuel, officially opens the Two Oceans Aquarium on 10 February 1996.

1997

- Professor Kader Asmal, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, opens the Old Mutual Environmental Education Centre. The Centre has been upgraded over the years and now boasts two fully equipped wet laboratories.
- In recognition of fishing company Irvin & Johnson's continuing contribution to the upkeep of the animals in the Aquarium, the largest exhibit, the 'Open Ocean Exhibit', is renamed the 'I&J Predator Exhibit'.
- The Aquarium's Adventure Dive Programme is launched – sport divers take the plunge with our ragged-tooth sharks, turtles, rays and fishes in the I&J Predator Exhibit.

1998

- The Alpha (now AfriSam) Activity Centre in the Lower Seal Gallery is officially opened by the Minister of Environmental Affairs & Tourism Pallo Jordan, on 11 June 1998.
- On 2 December 1998 the Strategic Fuel Fund (SFF) Sunfish Rehabilitation Centre opens. This facility provides an ideal opportunity to help sunfishes in distress and to gain much needed knowledge about these mysterious fishes.

1999

- The Aquarium opens its first large scale temporary exhibit, 'Fangs', which features a global collection of writhing eels and slithery sea creatures, including deadly sea snakes.
- A themed experiential attraction reveals the 'Guardians of the Lost Oceans'.
- The 'Fangs' marketing and advertising campaign claims the annual Marketing Organisation of the Year Award presented by the Institute of Marketing Management (IMM).

2000

- With generous sponsorship from BoE Limited, visitors to the Aquarium are given the opportunity to appreciate the vast size of southern right whales *Balaena glacialis* in the form of a skeleton, loaned to the Aquarium by the Marine Environmental Education Trust.

2001

- The Sappi Eco-Theatre opens and features a short, yet powerful cinematographic experience entitled 'The Web of Life'. We join a young boy on a journey during which he is reminded that human actions can have disastrous consequences for our environment. The presentation ends with the statement "If one person can make a difference, imagine what six billion of us can do – a thought to take home".

- On 8 December 2001 the Aquarium opens its second large-scale temporary exhibit, “The Living Dead – travelled in time, locked in rock”. The exhibit includes ‘living fossils’ such as crocodiles, iguanas and giant deep-water isopods. Many of the animals on display have remained virtually unchanged over millions of years.
- The first African penguin *Spheniscus demersus* chick to hatch in the Sappi River Meander Exhibit is tagged and sent to SANCCOB before being released into the wild.

2002

- The first fully equipped wet laboratory opens in the Old Mutual Environmental Education Centre. This exciting new facility, complete with aquariums, terrariums, microscopes and other laboratory equipment, provides opportunities for hands-on experiential learning and close inspection of a range of animals and plants.
- Eighteen smooth-hound sharks *Mustelus mustelus* are born in the I&J Predator Exhibit on 17 August.

2003

- In partnership with the City of Cape Town, the Aquarium opens the Children’s Puppet Theatre on 10 March 2003. This fully automated three-act marionette presentation depicts a young boy, Tshepo, who learns about various water-related dilemmas. Using humour and music, a cast of vibrant, colourful characters conveys important environmental messages to the audience in an unusual and positive manner.
- An African Black Oystercatcher chick *Haematopus moquini* hatches in the Sappi River Meander Exhibit. As far as we know this is the first time this endangered species has bred in captivity.
- The Aquarium opens a superb photographic exhibition of great white sharks by world-renowned photographer, Chris Fallows.

2004

- On 18 March 2004 the Aquarium, in collaboration with the AfriOceans Conservation Alliance, releases Maxine, a large (197kg) ragged-tooth shark *Carcharias taurus*, back into the oceans. Maxine is the iconic ambassador for the Save our Seas Foundation M-Sea (Maxine Science, Education and Awareness) Programme. With assistance from South Africa’s leading shark experts, the M-Sea Programme provides a unique opportunity to learn more about the lifestyle of ragged-tooth sharks and to raise public awareness of the plight of sharks worldwide.
- President Thabo Mbeki and Zanele Dlamini visit the Aquarium on Christmas Eve.

2005

- Baroness Margaret Thatcher and the Prince of Denmark visit the Aquarium in January 2005.
- In collaboration with the AfriOceans Conservation Alliance the Aquarium releases its second ragged tooth shark, Val, back into the oceans as part of the ongoing Save our Seas Foundation M- Sea Programme.
- Extensive renovations to accommodate a larger more defined tropical gallery to differentiate more clearly the unique features of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans
- We initiate a sponsored pensioner programme, which to date has enabled over 5 000 disadvantaged pensioners to visit the Aquarium for free and the introduction of the Adopt A School programme enabling the corporate sector to assist the Aquarium in bringing in over 11, 000 previously disadvantaged school children.
- On 13 November 2005 the Aquarium celebrates its 10th birthday in style.

- Saatchi & Saatchi (Cape) is nominated as a finalist in the category “Public Service Messages” at Cannes for two of the three “Rethink the Shark” television commercials produced by Groundglass.
- We release our second ragged-tooth shark, Val, as part of the Save our Seas Foundation M-Sea Programme. Val, so named for the amount of Valium used to sedate her, was collected in Arniston in 1998.

2006

- July 2006 marks the beginning of five months of major renovations to the East Wing of our building, culminating in the opening of Shoreline Café, our new restaurant with the first dedicated children’s area in the Waterfront.
- Our Managing Director, Dr Patrick Garratt is nominated as Vice-Chairman of the newly formed International Aquarium Forum. His standing and involvement in the international aquarium arena is a great credit to the Two Oceans Aquarium, to him and to everyone who has been and continues to be associated with our facility.
- Dee is the third shark to be released back into the ocean as part of the Save our Seas Foundation M-Sea Programme. At an estimated fifteen years of age and identifiable by a ‘beauty spot’ on her right side just in front of her pelvic fin, Dee was donated to the Aquarium by Bayworld in Port Elizabeth in 1995.
- *The Splendour of Sharks Exhibit* opens and includes a collection of spectacular shark images by world-renowned photographers, David Doubilet and Chris Fallows. The exhibit encourages people to view sharks as magnificent animals which have a rightful place in the oceans rather than as ‘man-eating monsters’. Each image is accompanied by a lesser known, but fascinating fact about the species depicted. Visitors to the Aquarium also have the opportunity to see the powerful, award-winning Saatchi & Saatchi *Rethink the Shark* campaign which shows that toasters, chairs and kites are individually responsible for killing more people each year than sharks!

2007

- Waterfront Holdings purchases a 65% share in the Two Oceans Aquarium from the Transnet Pension Fund. The Aquarium is subsequently sold as part of the Waterfront to London and Regional, Dubai World and a smaller BEE consortium.
- The Two Oceans Aquarium receives a Silver rating for its environmentally responsible operations from the Heritage Environmental Rating Programme on its first audit. The Aquarium is the second aquarium to receive this rating in South Africa after uShaka Marine World.
- Our four seals, Dozy, Daisy, Terminator and Mullet, leave their home of the past twelve years and are relocated to uShaka Marine World in Durban.

2008

- In partnership with the City of Cape Town and in recognition of WAZA’S (World Association of Zoos and Aquariums) Year of the Frog 2008, the Aquarium opens its third large-scale temporary exhibit hall in September 2008. *Frogs-Beyond the Pond* is a themed and highly interactive gallery which immerses visitors in the world of frogs and invites them to ‘jump in’ to find out more about these quirky yet extremely threatened creatures.
- We release our fourth shark, Elle, back into the ocean as part of the Save our Seas Foundation M-Sea Programme.
- Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu casts the first vote in an international campaign to raise awareness of cruelty of whaling, when he launches *Sacred Ocean – Global Voices Against the Cruelty of Whaling* at the Two Oceans Aquarium on 27 November 2008.

- The Two Oceans Aquarium, in partnership with the Cape Town International Convention Centre Bureau, wins the bid to host the 8th International Aquarium Congress (IAC) in 2012. Competing against facilities in Europe, the Aquarium's bid means that the Congress will be held not only in Africa, but also in the southern hemisphere, for the first time!

2009

- Together with the Table Mountain Aerial Cableway and City Sight-seeing Bus, the Aquarium launches the Go Cape Town card.
- Sam and Roy are the next ragged-tooth sharks to return to the ocean. They were collected in July 2007 off the beach at Sea Vale, which is approximately 30 kilometres south of East London. Roy Martin, the official "tagger" for Bayworld in Port Elizabeth, assisted the Aquarium's staff in collecting the sharks and was given the honour of naming them. Sam was named after one of Roy's daughters, Samantha, and the male is named after Roy himself.
- The Two Oceans Aquarium retains its gold status in the Heritage Environmental Rating Programme. It was awarded gold status in September 2008 for its efforts to minimize the impact of its operations on the environment and the most recent audit in October 2009 confirms that the Aquarium continues to improve in this regard.

2010

- Bianca Engel, Deputy Head of Education at the Aquarium, receives the award for the Best Marine Educator of the year at the annual National Marine and Coastal Educators' Network (MCEN) gala prize giving evening. Engel's ability to engage people and to captivate audiences and her efforts in securing the future of marine resources make her a worthy winner.
- *Tranquility*, the newest venue to be added to the Aquarium's already impressive repertoire is truly spectacular in scenery and furnishings. With a window that looks into the Kelp Forest exhibit, it provides a truly magnificent backdrop against which to hold an intimate dinner or cocktail.
- Ragged-tooth sharks Mandy and Noodle are released back into the ocean off Gordon's Bay. Noodle was introduced into the I&J Predator Exhibit in April 2008 after being caught by Trail Witthun in Struisbaai. Mandy was caught by the Aquarium's Operations Manager, Tinus Beukes on 18 February 2009 in Hamburg (60km south of East London).