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Audubon Aquarium  
of the Americas  
*A Facility of Audubon Nature Institute*

## **Audubon Aquarium of the Americas**

Audubon Aquarium of the Americas is located along the banks of the Mississippi River in the historic French Quarter. Ranked as one of the top five aquariums in the US, a visit the aquarium spans the underwater world from the Caribbean, to the Amazon Rainforest to the waters that give New Orleans its lifeblood: the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico.

The Aquarium's Caribbean Reef is teeming with life! Walk through the amazing underwater tunnel and watch moray eels, sting rays, angelfish and exotic sea creatures swim around you. Don't miss the opportunity to see one of our Caribbean Reef shows featuring a diver who hand-feeds the rays and interacts with the crowd.

Explore an underwater oil rig in the Aquarium's Gulf of Mexico exhibit-the largest exhibit at Audubon Aquarium of the Americas. The enormous tank is 17 feet deep and holds 400,000 gallons of man-made saltwater. This exhibit showcases stingrays, sharks, a school of blue runner, a green sea turtle named King Mydas, and undersea life that thrives around the barnacled pilings of a ¼ scale replica of an offshore oil rig.

Watch our bustling colony of penguins as they waddle, hop, dive and swim. Looking for snow in the exhibit? There isn't any...Audubon's two species of penguins are Rockhopper penguins from South America and African penguins. They are both temperate climate birds who prefer warmer water temperate than their cold water cousins!

Audubon Aquarium of the Americas is proud of our successful African Penguin breeding program, so be sure to stop by and wave hello to the newest member of our colony, Endymion, born February 21, 2009.

Our aquarium is home to two Southern sea otters, Buck and Emma, who came from California's Monterey Bay Aquarium in 1999. Found stranded and then rehabilitated by Monterey Bay Aquarium, Buck and Emma were deemed unable to return to the wild.

At home in the kelp forests off the California coast, sea otters spend all of their lives in the water. They eat, sleep, mate and even give birth at sea! In their home at Audubon Aquarium of the Americas, their custom-made habitat, a 25,000-gallon exhibit, features two swimming pools at different depths, rock nooks and a large behind-the-scenes area.

Audubon's sea otter enrichment program, designed specifically for Buck and Emma, includes a wide range of toys, treats and daily training. The training program is particularly important because it increases the bond

between the animals and the husbandry staff, provides mental exercises, and enables the animals to participate in their own health care. The training sessions are positive and fun so health care becomes stress-free as the otters come willingly when it's time for weigh-ins and check-ups.

Ironically, the sea otter's fur is its most important survival adaptation and the reason it is now an endangered animal. In the 18th- and 19th-centuries these animals were hunted for their pelts to near extinction. Through conservation efforts, their numbers have grown but they are once again facing a decrease in population due to diseases, pollutants, low food availability, kelp harvesting and net entrapment. Protected by the federal Endangered Species Act, the Southern sea otter's range, which once spanned from Japan to Baja California is now limited to the Central California coast. Buck and Emma are also under the protection of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which has entrusted their care to Audubon Aquarium of the Americas.

Entergy IMAX® Theatre, located next door to Audubon Aquarium of the Americas, features a spectacular flat screen, single projection, IMAX® 3D and high definition capabilities. IMAX® is the finest motion picture system in the world.