

**NEW EXHIBITION: It's Baby Season – Kelly Tarlton's Nov 13<sup>th</sup> – Dec 13<sup>th</sup>**



## **Meet the babies at Kelly Tarlton's – new nursery additions**

### **Juvenile School Sharks – *Galeorhinus galeus***

Eight young School shark pups are currently the guests of honour in Stingray Bay. The, thankfully almost mature, pups were born before term after their mother was injured in her abdominal region.

The mother shark was removed from the tank, anaesthetised and operated on, and is currently being monitored closely as she recovers. While an unfortunate and unusual birth, the pups are healthy and will be released into the wild in 6-8 weeks after they have put on weight (giving them better odds of surviving the many predators that prey on baby sharks).

Born about 30cm long, these School sharks will grow around 20cm per year until maturity. The maximum size recorded for a School shark is just under two metres. Tagging studies have shown that they can live to be at least 50. Females enter shallow bays and harbours in Spring and early Summer to have their pups. They don't have maternal instincts and simply "drop" them and leave them to survive (or not) on their own. School sharks are thought to give birth every two or three years.

School sharks are a very widespread species and occur in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. In New Zealand they are found around both islands and are commonly captured in shallow harbours through to water more than 500m deep. School Sharks are listed as "Vulnerable" within the subcategory of "Threatened" on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species

### **Baby Gentoo chicks – *Pygoscelis papua***

Kelly Tarlton's is the only place in New Zealand with a Gentoo Penguin breeding programme. This year they expect 10 to 15 chicks to hatch (Gentoo are notoriously secretive so until they emerge for food it is impossible to know how many eggs have hatched across the colony).

Some eggs have hatched already and the young chicks will be moved into a Gentoo group crèche at the beginning of December. The crèche replicates the way Gentoo are raised in the wild, it keeps them out of harms way and teaches them important socialisation skills – while also giving parents the opportunity to gain weight.

Gentoo chicks incubate for 35 days and then take up to 48 hours to break their way out of the egg. They lay low for a couple of days (living on the nutrients from the egg) before they begin emerging from underneath their parents to feed. Lucky visitors will be able to catch sight of the new chicks from Kelly Tarlton's viewing windows, the Snowcat ride and via a live web feed from inside the penguin enclosure.

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Gentoo are listed as “near threatened” on the World Conservation Union (IUCN) Red List, with an estimated 300,000 breeding pairs remaining in the wild in sub-Antarctic islands such as the Falklands, South Georgia and Kerguelen islands as well as on the Antarctic Peninsula itself. They are the third largest species of penguin behind the Emperor and King.

### **Eagle Ray – *Myliobatis tenuicaudatu***

Every year in spring female Eagle Rays give birth to live young after a gestation period of nearly 12 months.

The Eagle Ray at Kelly Tarlton's has given birth and the two pups are spreading their wings in Stingray Bay with the baby School sharks. To birth them she lifted off the bottom and started swimming, the pups were born tail first with their wings curled up (they looked like little sausage rolls!). As soon as they were free of their mother they uncurled their wings and began swimming.

Kelly Tarlton's Eagle Ray pups measure only about 25cm from wing tip to wing tip but are totally self-sufficient. They have been transferred into a smaller tank in Stingray Bay, with the baby School sharks, to simulate their natural behaviour (in the wild they would move into the safety of shallow estuarine areas and begin feeding on shellfish). They will grow up to 1.5 metres (wing tip to wing tip).

Eagle Rays swim using their 'wings' like a bird. They are usually seen swimming solo over reefs, but during summer they may congregate in large numbers in shallow bays. In New Zealand they are found only around the North Island. They have strong flat plates in both jaws, which they use for crushing hard-shelled prey such as shellfish and hermit crabs. Only the meat is swallowed, and small piles of broken shells are left behind. Our Eagle Rays prefer to be left alone but will nudge divers to get food.

## **Meet the babies at Kelly Tarlton's – expected deliveries**

### **Aqua-cultured Juvenile Hapuku – *Polyprion oxygeneios***

Born and reared by the National Institute of Water and Atmosphere (NIWA) in Ruakaka, Northland, these young Hapuku are some of the first of this highly valued species to be bred in captivity.

Hapuku are curious fish and will investigate divers or anything unusual. They grow into one of the largest bottom dwelling fish in New Zealand waters. They swim in schools and live around offshore pinnacles where there is plenty of fish life and caves or overhangs to hide in. They eat a variety of fish, squid and large crustaceans, including crayfish. **GROW** up to 2 meters and 50kg. **FOUND** all around New Zealand. **OTHER NAMES** - Grouper, Whapuku, and wreckfish.

### **Carpet Shark – *Cephaloscyllium isabellum***

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Kelly Tarlton's currently has a Carpet Shark egg case waiting to hatch. Adults lay the eggs enclosed in tough leathery cases, which are sometimes known as 'Mermaids purses'. The process of laying eggs is one of three ways sharks are born – some species incubate eggs inside themselves while others give birth to live baby sharks. Kelly Tarlton's egg case is due to hatch during the exhibition and the baby shark can be easily seen moving inside its semi-transparent home. Sharing the tank are baby carpet sharks of various ages that have been born at Kelly Tarlton's during the year.

Carpet Sharks are nocturnal. During the day they rest in dark holes, where camouflage makes them almost invisible. At night they roam widely (often over a sandy or shelly bottom) in search of fish, krill, crabs, crayfish, octopus and squid, which they catch and hold with their large mouths and sharp teeth. Carpet sharks are usually sluggish and are not dangerous, but they do have sharp teeth! As a defence they inflate their stomachs with air or water, greatly increasing their girth. **GROW** up to 1 meter. **FOUND** Cape Reinga to Snares and Chatham Islands. **OTHER NAMES** – Pekapeka, Swell shark.

### **Seahorse – *Hippocampus abdominalis***

Baby seahorses are due to be born at Kelly Tarlton's in the next month. However you won't see any pregnant mothers around because with seahorses it's the dads that have the babies! Because of that it's hardly surprising that the bigger the males stomach area, the more handsome he becomes to nearby females! The female lays her eggs inside a special brood pouch on the underside of the male's abdomen. The male carries the eggs for around four and a half weeks until they hatch. The baby seahorses will emerge from the pouch when fully developed and will measure less than 1cm but number anywhere between 40 and 400. Seahorses are found in harbours, bays and reefs. They feed on small crustaceans that they find on the seaweed they inhabit, and also on plankton. **GROW** up to 25cm. **FOUND** all around New Zealand and South Australia. **OTHER NAME** – Manaiia, Pot bellied seahorse.

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