

NEWS RELEASE

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Virginia Aquarium's Beloved Otter, Tippy, Mourned

(Virginia Beach, VA) – The elderly North American river otter, Tippy, was humanely euthanized at the Virginia Aquarium on November 27, 2023. The staff at the Virginia Aquarium are mourning the loss of the 16-year-old otter.

A diagnostic procedure was conducted on September 12 after Aquarium staff observed signs that the 16-year-old otter's weight was decreasing despite having a normal appetite. The veterinary team, joined by a veterinary internal medicine specialist, used an endoscope to examine and sample his digestive tract, which led to the diagnosis of intestinal lymphoma. Following this diagnosis, Tippy received treatment to support his digestive system and target the lymphoma. He was monitored closely and provided supportive care throughout treatment to ensure his comfort. Though he initially responded well to treatment, over the weekend his overall health declined. After thoughtful and careful study of Tippy's condition, the Aquarium's veterinary and animal care team made the difficult decision to euthanize him.

Tippy was born at the Sedgwick County Zoo on March 27, 2007, and joined the Virginia Aquarium on January 10, 2008. According to his trainers, Tippy was inquisitive and a problem solver, and enjoyed ice cakes that he would receive on his birthday and holidays. His favorite food was herring, and his favorite item to interact with was fake kelp.

North American river otters typically live 8 to 9 years in their natural habitat and well into their teens under human care. They are native to the area, although otters' habitat range is impacted by habitat loss and a sensitivity to environmental pollution.

“Our staff have cared for Tippy for nearly 16 years. His antics and vibrant persona are missed,” said Cynthia Whitbred-Spanoulis, president and CEO of the Virginia Aquarium. “I am so very proud of our dedicated team and thank each of them for their compassionate care.”

[Images of Tippy](#) are available.

Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center

The [Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center's](#) mission is to connect people to the marine environment, inspiring a more sustainable future. The Aquarium aspires to be a driver in conservation, education, tourism, and sustainability, leading the charge to save wildlife and their ecosystems. Owned by the City of Virginia Beach, the Aquarium operates as a city department in partnership with the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Foundation. The Aquarium is proud to be an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquarium, and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

The Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, supports the work of the Virginia Aquarium. The Foundation procures and maintains the Aquarium's exhibits, including the animals and habitats. It is also responsible for annual and capital fundraising, administration and funding for the Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response Program, conservation and scientific research efforts, and the Aquarium's mission-related education programs. You can be a part of our mission by making a [tax-deductible donation](#) to support our programming.

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