

NEWS RELEASE

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Beloved Aquarium Otter Passed Away Unexpectedly

Virginia Beach, VA - The Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center's 12-year-old North American river otter, Sheldon, passed unexpectedly this morning during a routine anesthetic procedure for his annual exam. Virginia Aquarium staff are deeply saddened and grieving this significant loss.

As a part of the Virginia Aquarium's quality veterinary practices and high standards for animal care, animals receive annual exams and health assessments. Sheldon's exam included bloodwork, endoscopy, ultrasound, radiographs, and a general check-up.

Sheldon had no indication of health abnormalities prior to or during the procedure. The veterinary team will be conducting a necropsy for further investigation.

The Virginia Aquarium staff is mourning the loss of Sheldon, who has been professionally cared for by the mammal animal care team since he was a pup. The relationships that staff have built with him during this time make this loss incredibly difficult.

Sheldon was born in 2012 and rescued as a newborn after being abandoned by his mother. He was the darker-colored and larger of the two otters on exhibit at the South Building. Sheldon's favorite enrichment items were ice and car wash strips. Some of his known behaviors were sucking on his paw, burrowing, and being vocal with chirps and humming.

The Virginia Aquarium would like to thank everyone who shared in the joy that Sheldon brought to the Aquarium and appreciates the community's thoughts during this difficult time.

[Images of Sheldon](#) courtesy of the Virginia Aquarium.

[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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