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*Digital Images/B-roll Available Upon Request*

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## **NEW SHOREBIRD SANCTUARY EXHIBIT DEBUTS** **AT THE AQUARIUM OF THE PACIFIC**

### **Aquarium hopes new feathered friends will entice Southland residents to protect their local endangered wetland habitats**

**March 29, 2007, Long Beach, Calif.**—The Aquarium of the Pacific unveiled a new exhibit today highlighting birds that depend on Southern California’s wetlands for survival. “We hope our new Shorebird Sanctuary exhibit will entice visitors to want to help protect our Southland wetlands,” said Jerry Schubel, Aquarium of the Pacific president & CEO.

Designed to resemble a tidal wetland, such as Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, this exhibit includes five species of shore and migratory birds, estuarine fishes, and native vegetation. The Black-necked Stilt, Black-bellied Plover, Western Snowy Plover, Killdeer, and Ruddy Duck are featured in the new 1,200 square-foot exhibit. Topsmelt, black perch, and shiner surfperch can be found in the exhibits’ 15,000 gallon water area.

“The animals and plants highlighted in our exhibit as well as various endangered species depend on wetlands for survival. In fact, California’s wetlands are home to over 40 of the state’s rare, threatened, and endangered species,” said Perry Hampton, Aquarium of the Pacific director of animal husbandry.

With less than 13,000 acres of wetlands remaining in Southern California, this region has lost more wetland habitat than central and northern California combined. As a result, migratory birds wintering in Southern California’s wetlands have declined from about 60 million to 2 million.

“Despite the growing need to protect the few wetlands left in our region, many residents do not know what wetlands are or why they are important. That is why we felt it was critical to create an exhibit where people could get up close with some of the animals while learning about our local wetlands,” said Schubel. The new exhibit will reach the 1.4 million people who visit the Aquarium annually, who are mostly from Southern California. The Shorebird Sanctuary exhibit was made possible in part by funding from NOAA’s National Marine Sanctuary Program.

**More**

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### Wetlands

California has lost over 95 percent of its original wetlands, including marshes, bogs, and baylands, primarily due to coastal development. **Threatened and endangered wetlands can be found throughout Southern California: Los Angeles**—Trancas Lagoon, Malibu Lagoon, Topanga Lagoon, Ballona Lagoon, Balloona Creek Wetlands, and Los Altos River; **Long Beach**—Los Cerritos Wetlands and Hellman Ranch Wetlands; and **Orange County**—Anaheim Bay/Seal Beach Wetlands, Bolsa Chica Wetlands, Huntington Wetlands, Santa Ana River, San Joaquin Marsh, Upper Newport Bay, Laguna Lakes, and San Juan Creek.

Much of the Earth's wildlife—birds, fish, small mammals, and plants—depends on wetlands for survival. In addition to providing food, breeding, and nursery grounds for a variety of animals, wetlands are vital to our ecosystem because they filter and clean our water as well as provide flood control. Wetlands also offer recreational opportunities for birdwatchers, photographers, kayakers, and other outdoor enthusiasts. Yet, despite all of the benefits wetlands offer, they continue to be filled, drained, and dredged. The Aquarium feels public empowerment through education is key to protecting the few wetlands remaining in our region.

### Aquarium

The Aquarium of the Pacific, a nonprofit institution, celebrates our planet's largest and most diverse body of water: the Pacific Ocean. Home to more than 12,500 animals, the Aquarium explores the waters of Southern California and Baja and the Northern and Tropical Pacific. The Aquarium features: hands-on discovery labs staffed by knowledgeable volunteers; the Lorikeet Forest aviary; its interactive Shark Lagoon, featuring California's only bull shark; and the new *Shorebird Sanctuary* exhibit. Located at 100 Aquarium Way in Long Beach, the Aquarium is open daily from 9 a.m.-6 p.m. (except Dec. 25 and during the Grand Prix April 13-15, 2007). Admission is \$20.95 adult (12+), \$17.95 senior (62+), \$11.95 child (3-11), and free for children under age 3 and Aquarium members. A world of discovery awaits people of all ages, backgrounds, and interests. For more information, the public can call 562-590-3100 or visit [www.aquariumofpacific.org](http://www.aquariumofpacific.org)

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