



November 23, 2020

MEDIA ADVISORY

Marineland Canada celebrates the next chapter in Beluga whale legacy

Marineland is hosting an exciting day of events on November 27 to commemorate the next chapter in our Beluga whale legacy. The park will officially break ground on a brand-new beluga habitat following a press release featuring park owner Marie Holer, Head Veterinarian Dr. June Mergl and Curator of Marine Mammals Kelly Snider. Following will be a memorable photo opportunity with our belugas.

DATE:	Friday, November 27, 2020
WHERE:	Marineland Canada 7657 Portage Rd. Niagara Falls Ont. L2E 6X8
WHO:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Marie Holer, Park Owner○ Dr. June Mergl, Marine Mammal Veterinarian○ Kelly Snider, Curator of Marine Mammals
EVENT ITINERARY:	<p>Press Conference 10 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. Arctic Cove</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Hear from Marie Holer, Dr. June Mergl, and Kelly Snider on why the new beluga whale habitat is a historic new chapter for Marineland <p>Groundbreaking Event 11 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. New sight of beluga habitat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Marie Holer, Dr. June Mergl, Kelly Snider, and senior beluga care staff will make the first shovel of the new habitat <p>Photo Opportunity 11:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Arctic Cove</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Meet and greet opportunity with a beluga whale (face coverings required)○ Watch the beluga whales interact with their marine mammal specialists

A world-class habitat allows us to continue our mission of beluga conservation.

Marineland Canada is a family owned theme park, where Canadians and visitors from around the globe can come and connect with nature. The belugas that call Marineland home are the largest group of belugas in any zoological park in the entire world. Our beluga program started in 1999 and in 2003 Arctic Cove was built to accommodate our growing population. They serve as ambassadors to their wild counterparts and inspire our visitors to care more about the natural world. Marineland's new beluga habitat continues our commitment to the welfare of these animals, both in our care and in the wild.

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To RSVP and to arrange interviews, please contact:

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The logo for Marineland, featuring the word "Marineland" in a red, stylized serif font. The letters "M", "a", "r", "i", "n", "e", and "l" are connected, with a decorative flourish under the "l". The "e" and "a" are also connected. The "d" is separate and has a small loop at the bottom.

MEDIA RELEASE

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November 27, 2020

For Immediate Release

MARINELAND BREAKS GROUND ON WORLD-CLASS BELUGA WHALE HABITAT

(Nov. 27, 2020) / *Niagara Falls, Ont.*: Today at Marineland construction begins on a new state-of-the-art beluga whale environment, opening spring 2023. The new habitat, dubbed Arctic Encounter, proves Marineland's commitment to the welfare of the 50 belugas in their care. With seven pools and 10 million gallons (about 38 million liters) of water, the new habitat will allow marine mammal specialists to provide better care to the whales. The whales will also participate in vital research, aiding in conservation efforts of wild belugas.

"This will provide our belugas with a more suitable environment and better care facilities," says head veterinarian, Dr. June Mergl. "We will be able to perform safer medical and diagnostic procedures and contribute to ongoing beluga research projects." Kelly Snider, manager of marine mammals says, "this new habitat will allow guests to come closer to our whales and show guests how we care for them."

Of the seven pools at Arctic Encounter, two of them are medical pools with a fast-rising floor for medical procedures. The pools will be a maximum depth of 40 feet (12 meters) and will provide the animals with new areas to explore. The public will experience new views of the belugas above and below the water and allow visitors to get up close with them in new animal encounters.

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About Marineland

Marineland Canada is a family-owned theme park, where Canadians and visitors from around the globe can come and connect with nature. Marineland is home to the largest group of belugas in any zoological park in the entire world; they serve as ambassadors to their wild counterparts. Marineland provides education through memorable experiences, inspiring visitors to care more about the natural world.

The logo for Marineland, featuring the word "Marineland" in a stylized, red, serif font. The letter "M" is particularly large and has a decorative flourish that extends under the "a".

Biography

Dr. June Mergl
Head Veterinarian
Marineland Canada

Dr. June Mergl has earned her place in the Niagara Falls veterinary community with 35 years of experience. June studied at Virginia-Maryland College and graduated with a degree in veterinary medicine in 1985. She began her time as a vet with Marineland in



1988 and was promoted to head veterinarian in 2001. Animals are at the heart of everything June does and outside of Marineland she also manages her late husband's clinic, the Niagara Falls Animal Medical Centre. When not working with whales and family pets, June likes to share her heart worldwide. In 2012, the Mergl family trekked Mount Kilimanjaro to raise money for a Tanzanian orphanage. June also participates in the Rotary International National Immunization Days against polio in India and West Africa. In 1993, June was named Niagara Falls Women of the year for her humanitarian efforts.

June is very active in the veterinary community in Niagara Falls, throughout Canada and in the United States. She enjoys talking to future veterinary students about her experiences with marine mammals. In 2013 the Council of the College of Veterinarians of Ontario appointed Dr. June Mergl to the Minimum Standards for Zoo Facilities Task Force. June also writes and contributes to veterinary books and journals.

June has been able to share her expertise on animal care and welfare at the park successfully with the public and handles any situation with poise, dignity and confidence.

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For more information, contact:

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Backgrounder

Cetaceans in Zoological Facilities

A strong anti-zoo narrative is growing worldwide and over the last 10 years has become more prevalent in Canada. In a 2019 [case study from World Animal Protection](#) (an organization with a heavy anti-zoo ideology), 89 per cent of Canadians believe that wild animals have no place in zoological facilities. What animal rights groups fail to mention are the benefits that come from having animals in managed care, instead focusing on the negative aspects.

With regards to cetaceans (whales and dolphins) in zoological facilities in Canada, bill S203 – a ban on holding cetaceans at zoos and aquariums passed June 2019 – will prove to have negative long-term outcomes for whales and dolphins that frequent and live in Canadian waters. Marineland Canada has been providing opportunities for Canadians to experience whales and dolphins for almost 60 years and will continue to share their beluga family with Canadians for years to come.

Marine parks provide opportunities for people to experience cetaceans

It is an incredible experience to go whale watching and be able to see wild whales. However, this experience is not possible for those wishing to connect with cetaceans. Whale watching can be extremely costly for families and there is no guarantee of seeing whales. Zoological facilities allow visitors to have up close experiences with these animals in a more affordable way. Visitors will have a more personal connection with these animals by being able to see them in closer proximity.

Connections with cetaceans living in human care inspires conservation action

Documentaries and books are great ways to learn about wild animals. However, research shows that having a personal connection to nature creates a stronger desire for better conservation efforts. Experiencing belugas up close results in a higher likelihood of inspiring guests, encouraging them to protect belugas in the wild. Animal interaction programs and educational presentations are key tools used to inspire guests to care for these animals. Shows that utilize theatrical elements spark visitors' interest in these animals and inspire them to learn more about them. A majority of zoological facilities offer a variety of different ways to meet and interact with whales and dolphins. Marineland offers an educational presentation – teaching about sea lions, dolphins and belugas – as well as meeting a beluga at Arctic Cove, both with the primary goal to foster a connection for belugas and their natural environment.

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Cetaceans in managed care participate in vital scientific research

Research highlighted in traditional media is often based on field research of wild cetaceans. There is a strong narrative that observational research on wild cetaceans undermines the research done in managed care facilities. Much of our scientific knowledge of whales and dolphins has actually been gained through the study of them under human care. The animals in our care voluntarily participate in research that directly benefits them and their wild counterparts. As a result, the zoological community

has learned about anatomy, to gestation periods of specific cetaceans, to neurological studies. The scientific study of these animals is vital to further the knowledge of marine mammals and better understand the threats they face out in the natural environment.

The Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks (AMMPA)

The Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums is a third-party association for marine mammal parks, zoological institutions and research facilities. The AMMPA creates world class, industry leading standards to ensure the highest welfare possible for animals living at accredited facilities.

According to the AMMPA in a [2012 public opinion survey](#), 94 per cent of participants feel that visiting a zoological facility can inspire greater conservation actions for wild animals and ocean ecosystems we share. The survey also showed that 94 per cent of participants believe that zoological facilities provide a unique learning opportunity with valuable information about the animals in their care and in the wild.

Long-term need for marine parks and zoological facilities

Despite the growing concern for animals living in man-made settings, there is validation that having them under our care is beneficial. As an industry, zoos, marine parks and research groups must work together to spread the positive message of these facilities.

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Marineland

Fact Sheet



Marineland Canada's History

- Founder John Holer opened Marineland in 1961 after coming to Niagara Falls from Slovenia in the 1950's
- First opened as "Marine Wonderland", and brought in elephants, bears, a tiger and a killer whale and has rebranded over the years to what is now Marineland Canada
- After John's passing in 2018, his wife Marie Holer continues his legacy

Beluga Whales

- The scientific name for beluga whales is *Delphinapterus leucas*
- They are often referred to as canaries of the sea, as they make a wide variety of vocalizations
- One of the few cetaceans without fused neck vertebrae, allowing neck flexibility for special awareness
- The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) lists belugas as "near threatened", though three isolated stocks of belugas are listed as "critically endangered".ⁱ

Marineland's Beluga Whales

- Marineland is home to the largest population of beluga whales out of any marine park in the entire world – with 50 individuals
- Calves born at the park were all conceived through natural breeding behaviour and are part of the most successful breeding program for belugas

Arctic Encounter

- Will include the building of a new life support systems for water quality—with 99% of the water being recycled and filtered back into the habitat
- A wave flow machine will be built into the pools to simulate a natural arctic environment as well as water sprayers to and provide enrichment to the animals
- An animal encounter pool will allow guests more personal connections with the whales—new programs include swimming with a beluga and becoming a trainer for a day
- Two medical pools, each with a fast-rising floor, of which can bring a beluga out of the water in 30 seconds
- Arctic Encounter will also include two new staff buildings, providing a new office, a laboratory and a new fish house that meets Canadian food prep and Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks standards
- New shade structure will provide sun protection to the animals

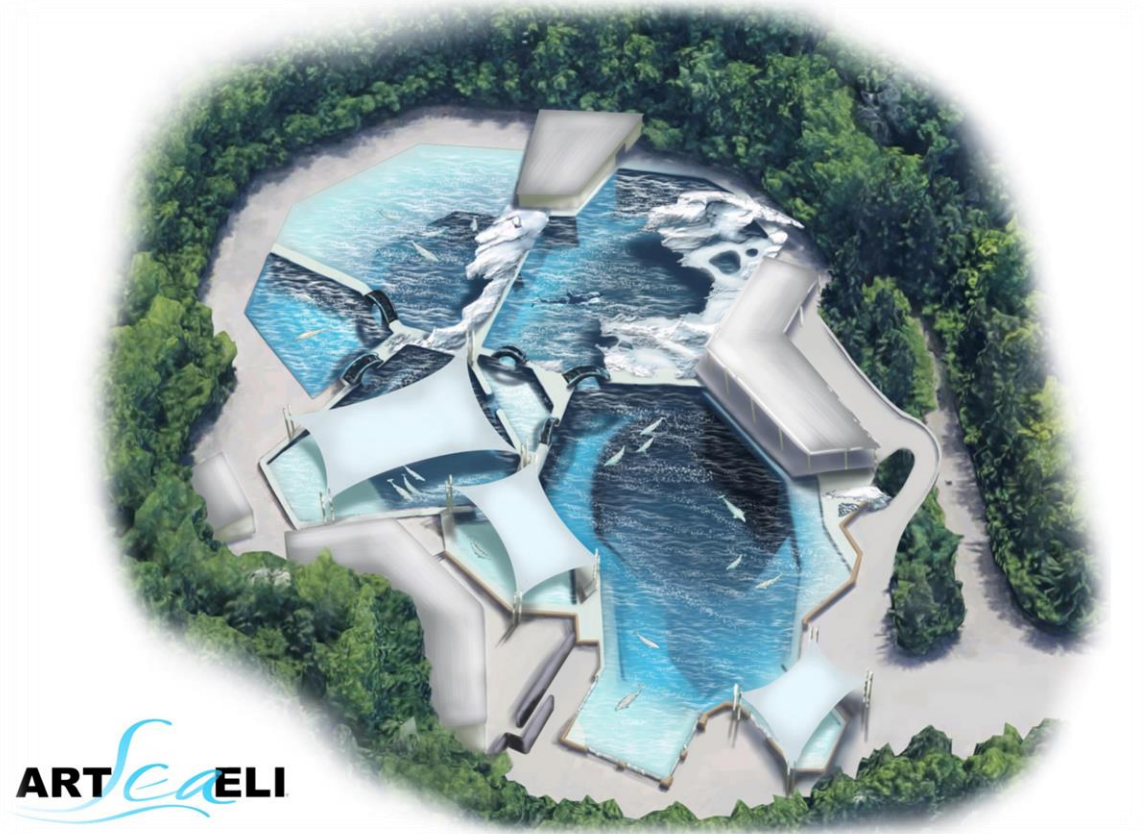
Partnership with World Class Researchers

- In 2019, Marineland and Sea Research Foundation (SRF) announced a partnership to benefit wild beluga whalesⁱⁱ

- Partnership includes working closely with Mystic Aquarium and Georgia Aquarium to collect data from the whales to contribute to SRF research initiatives, i.e. immune system and communication studies
- In working closely with SRF and Georgia Aquarium, Marineland will regain their spot as a leader in beluga research

Marineland

Concept art for Arctic Encounter, by habitat designer Eli Smith. An aerial view of the new habitat, which will include shade structures for the animals, two new medical pools, a new viewing pavilion for guests, and staff buildings.



ⁱ The Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums: Beluga Fact Sheet

<https://www.ampmpa.org/sites/default/files/files/animalfactsheets/AMMPA-BelugaWhaleFactSheet-WEB.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Marineland Canada and Sea Research Foundation (associated with Mystic Aquarium) enters partnership

<https://www.stcatharinesstandard.ca/news/niagara-region/2019/06/28/marineland-partners-with-sea-research-foundation.html>