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THE NATIONAL AQUARIUM IN BALTIMORE PREPARES FOR THE BIRTHS OF
TWO ATLANTIC BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN CALVES

Two pregnant dolphins expected to give birth in July or August

Baltimore, June 12, 2008 – The National Aquarium in Baltimore is pleased to announce the pregnancy of two Atlantic bottlenose dolphins, Shiloh and Chesapeake. After months of regular check-ups, ultrasounds and other health assessments performed by the Aquarium's animal care staff, it is estimated that both dolphins are expected to give birth in late July or August.

Marine mammal facilities dedicate extensive resources to meeting the physiological and social requirements of animals. Animals are housed in habitats that allow them to exhibit a full range of natural behaviors, such as breeding. As a result of this and the quality health care these animals receive, over half of all dolphins currently living in aquariums were born in marine life parks, aquariums, or zoos.

The gestation period for dolphins is typically 10-12 months. When Shiloh and Chesapeake were suspected to be pregnant, the Aquarium's marine mammal staff stopped requesting high-energy behaviors of the two dolphins during daily dolphin shows. The veterinary staff immediately began providing special care that has included:

- Periodic ultrasounds to monitor fetal growth and health
- Daily vitamin supplementation and diet monitoring
- Blood assessments
- Consistent behavioral and visual observations

Both expectant mothers are in good health, all exams have shown positive results, and Aquarium veterinarians and animal care staff are cautiously optimistic about the pregnancies. In both natural settings and in aquariums, calves have a high mortality rate. Approximately 1/3 of all calves do not live to one year of age.

Shiloh is approximately 29 years old and arrived at the National Aquarium in 1990. She has given birth to three calves, two of them at the Aquarium. Chesapeake is a daughter of Shiloh, born at the Aquarium in 1992. Both dolphins are experienced mothers: in fact, both are currently in the nursing pool assisting Jade, new mother to Foster, with her motherly duties.

The marine mammal staff and a group of trained volunteers will begin 24-hour observations in mid-July to monitor each dolphin for signs of labor. The staff is prepared to provide an ideal setting for the newborns by adjusting the water salinity for easier swimming and closing the amphitheater for 24-48 hours after each birth to provide undisturbed time for the mother to establish a bond with her calf. The survival of the calf depends largely on the mother.

The newest addition to the Aquarium's dolphin family was Foster, born in September 2007. Foster is thriving at the Aquarium, eating 8 lbs of fish a day and beginning to build relationships with the marine mammal trainers.

The public is encouraged to visit Waterlog, the Aquarium's new blog, at www.aqua.org/blog to learn more about the dolphin births and for the latest updates from the marine mammal team as they prepare for the expected births.

The National Aquarium in Baltimore, a non-profit organization, is Maryland's most exciting and popular cultural attraction, as well as one of the region's leading conservation and education resources, hosting more than 1.6 million visitors per year. The Aquarium's mission is to connect people with aquatic life in order to create a better world for both. It is dedicated to education and conservation through more than a dozen programs that serve the environment and the community.

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