

Sciencenter Connection: Seahorses and Cichlids and Frogs, Oh My!



TIM W. SCOTT
Sciencenter Connection

The Sciencenter's Saltonstall Animal Room helps educate families about animal and ecosystem diversity, while empowering them to be stewards of their natural environment. After months of planning, building, and testing the waters, the first of three major animal room renovations is now complete. Four custom-built aquariums with natural backdrops now showcase unique habitats and aquatic life from around the world.

Inside the Florida mangrove aquarium you'll find lined seahorses that hook their prehensile tails to the native red mangrove plants and sea grasses. The Indo-Pacific coral reef aquarium is home to a host of fish with memorable names, like the pajama cardinal, pink skunk clownfish, and hippo tang, to name a few. An invasive red lionfish

displays its long venomous spines in an immersive shipwreck aquarium representing the Carolina coast. Cichlids show off their vibrant colors in an aquarium mimicking one of the oldest and deepest lakes in the world, Lake Malawi of East Africa.

While you're here you'll also see some old friends in brand new enclosures. Our axolotls are enjoying a natural freshwater plant aquarium representing the frigid waters of Lake Xochimilco in Mexico, and our White's tree frogs seem to have taken up residence on the side of an Australian home. Next door, a new Central American rainforest reveals red eye tree frogs. In the center of the room you'll also find two new large enclosures that will soon display poison dart frogs from the Amazon rainforest and a desert lizard from North Africa. These five new herpetological habitats represent the beginning stages of the second phase of renovations: twelve new amphibian and reptile habitats!

And there's still more to come! The Sciencenter's Live Exhibit Coordinator, Julie Yurek, is in the process of planning a new "native New Yorker" section with additional habitats that will highlight fish, reptiles and amphibians found in your very own backyard. Julie hopes the newly renovated and expanded Saltonstall Animal Room will inspire and empower the next generation of biologists and ecologists. She also hopes these new exhibits will help connect guests more closely to nature so they'll be empowered to help protect our delicate ecosystems.

After you've visited our friends in the Saltonstall Animal Room, stop in to Sciencenter Take-Out, The Museum store where you can

take home your own animal buddies like toy and plush snakes, turtles, lizards and more. Now through December 31 all purchases are 10% off, with an additional discount for members.

To stay in-the-know of Sciencenter news and events, visit www.sciencenter.org, where you can also sign up for our monthly e-News. Like us on Facebook for exclusive Sciencenter pictures and news.

Tim W. Scott is the Director for Program at the Sciencenter.

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