

## **DISCOVERY REEF: THE 10 MOST ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **1 - HOW BIG IS THE TANK?**

The Discovery Reef is 65 feet long, 13 feet deep and 20 feet wide at its widest point. It holds 100,000 gallons of saltwater and is one of the largest zoo aquariums in the country.

### **2 - HOW DO YOU MAKE SALTWATER?**

A large underground vault in the back area is used to mix artificial sea water. Well water is mixed with a salt mixture that duplicates natural sea water. It takes about 20 tons of salt to keep the correct salinity.

### **3 - IS THE CORAL REAL?**

No. More than 1,200 pieces of artificial coral decorate the urethane tank. The rock work is made out of concrete and plastic. Coral reefs are fragile ecosystems and home aquarists should refrain from purchasing live coral.

### **4 - HOW MANY ANIMALS ARE IN THE TANK?**

There are more than 1,000 animals, including fish, sharks, stingrays and a sea turtle, representing more than 100 species in the exhibit. In just a years time, the tank will be populated with up to 2,000 animals representing 200 or more species.

### **5 - WHAT IS THE TEMPERATURE OF THE WATER?**

The water is maintained at a constant 76 degrees Fahrenheit. In the tropics where coral reefs occur, there is little fluctuation in temperature and the length of daylight. Coral reefs are found in a narrow belt around the earth between tropics of Cancer and Capricorn and require clear, silt-free warm water.

### **6 - WHAT DO THE ANIMALS EAT?**

With more than 100 species in one exhibit, is it difficult to meet all the animals nutritional needs? No. Aquarists make a gelatin which contains a mixture of foods including fish, shrimp, squid, vegetables, vitamins and minerals. This way the diet can be changed as needed to ensure a balanced diet. Medications can also be added as needed. Fresh seafood's and vegetables, like spinach, lettuce and carrots are also offered.

### **7 - HOW DO YOU CLEAN THE TANK?**

Most of the fish waste and uneaten food is removed and broken down by a state-of-the-art filtration system which can be viewed by the public through a port window. It is sort of a mini-sewage treatment plant. Tank cleaning, window cleaning, and a good deal of feeding is performed by the aquarium staff on Scuba.

#### 8 - WHERE DID THE DISCOVERY REEF ANIMALS COME FROM?

Many of the animals found in the Discovery Reef have been acquired by the Columbus Zoo from other aquariums. Other fish were purchased from reputable dealers that collected the fish in a humane and safe fashion. All new animals go through an extensive 45 day quarantine period. One advantage to a large tank is the success in breeding marine fish in captivity and it is our long range goal to become more self-sustaining through captive propagation.

#### 9 - WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THE OLD BUILDING?

The new building houses our tropical marine collection. The old building is still a very important part of our aquatic collection. It houses our freshwater fish, invertebrates and amphibians. In addition, it houses many endangered species which are part of international endangered species breeding programs.

#### 10 - DO THE FISH EAT ONE ANOTHER?

With this many animals mixed together, there is occasionally a chance of predation. The careful selection of animals and the ample hiding places prevent much of this. Most fish set up and defend territories. These territories are full of crevices and hiding places to retreat in case of danger much like on an actual coral reef.