

Forward! Group 4 Aqua Journal

Overcoming the disaster and looking to the future

Behind the scenes at Aquamarine

The five members of Group 4 visited Aquamarine Fukushima, spending a whole day covering the aquarium. As a special treat, we had the opportunity to visit the feeding station which is usually off limits to visitors. The aquarium was severely affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake, which caused extensive damage to the fish tanks resulting in the death of 90% of the fish in the aquarium. Against all odds, the aquarium was able to reopen on July 15, 2011, and has recovered to the point where there are more species of fish there now than there was before the disaster. Although the number of visitors to the aquarium is still below what it used to be before the disaster, it is also gradually increasing. The resilience with which Aquamarine has been able to overcome hardships and recover from the extensive damage caused by the earthquake and tsunami is inspiring. (Watanabe)

We received permission to visit areas usually restricted to authorized personnel and had the chance to speak with two of the aquarium's caretakers, Tomoyuki Uehara and Kenichi Fujii. According to the caretakers, the most difficult part of their job is feeding

the fish. Every day, 30 to 40 kilos of feed is thrown into each of the fish tanks. The caretaker's other responsibilities include caring for the fish that have not been put on display and regular cleaning of the tanks. The caretakers do a great job introducing the splendors of the ocean around



Members of our group feeding the fish at Aquamarine Fukushima

Fukushima to visitors from both inside and outside of the prefecture. We also had the opportunity to try our hand at feeding the fish. The feed we used included blue-sprat, shrimp, and squid, which we fed to Japanese pilchard, tuna, pelagic stingray, and skipjack tuna. In the process, we

learned about various tricks and techniques used at public aquariums, such as slapping the feed onto the water's surface to attract the attention of the fish residing at the bottom of the tank to ensure they are also fed.

(Murayama)

We got into a large fish stretcher

As part of our coverage, we got to lie inside one of the fish stretchers that are used for transporting large fish such as humphead wrasse and sharks. The stretcher, made of vinyl and wooden poles, feels hard to the touch. Lying inside was a special experience for us and lots of fun. (Suzuki)



Suzuki inside a fish stretcher

The only one of its kind in the world:

Specimens of two coelacanth species on display

Specimens of coelacanth brought in from Africa and Indonesia are currently being exhibited at Aquamarine Fukushima, making it the only place in the world where specimens of the two known living coelacanth species are on display. The coelacanth's appearance remains unchanged since ancient times and is therefore considered to be a valuable source of information about ocean life. Marine researchers from Aquamarine Fukushima have visited Indonesia and Africa a number of times, to conduct coelacanth-related research.



Coelacanth (Illustration by Takuma Iwatani)

First attempt in the world to breed species such as the Indo-Pacific sailfish and opah

Currently, there are 800 different species of animals and a total of 130,000 animals at Aquamarine, compared to 750 species and a total of 200,000 animals that were there before the disaster. Although the aquarium sustained extensive damage as a result of the Great East Japan Earthquake, no effort is being spared to meet to the expectations of Fukushima's residents and achieve full recovery.

As part of a new initiative, there are plans to start a breeding program for new species of fish at the aquarium, such as the Indo-Pacific sailfish and opah. The project will be the first such attempt in the world, and Uehara and Fujii are looking forward to the challenge. (Iwatani)

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