

Georgia Aquarium exhibits preserved sea creatures

September 28 2013, by Kate Brumback



In this Thursday, Sept. 26, 2013 photo, the cartilaginous skeleton of a white tipped reef shark is displayed during a touring exhibit, "Sea Monsters Revealed: Aquatic Bodies." The exhibit is set to open Friday, Sept. 27, at the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta. It includes the preserved bodies of 18 big sea creatures along with more than 150 individual organs and smaller animals. The bodies are preserved using a polymer preservation technique known as plastination. (AP Photo/Kate Brumback)

The Georgia Aquarium is giving visitors the chance to peer inside the bodies of giant sea creatures.

The exhibit, "Sea Monsters Revealed: Aquatic Bodies," includes the preserved bodies of shark and other animals with their flesh stripped away to expose muscles, bones and organs underneath.

The exhibit, which opens Friday at the aquarium, is similar to the popular "Bodies" and "Body Worlds" exhibits of dissected human bodies that have toured the world.

The "Sea Monsters Revealed" show includes 18 big sea creatures—a 6-foot(1.8-meter)-wide devil ray, a 15-foot(4.5-meter)-long mako shark and an 18-foot(5.5-meter)-long, 3,000-pound (1,361-kilogram) whale shark—along with more than 150 individual organs and smaller animals.

As visitors walk along one side of the giant whale shark, the characteristic gray skin with white dots can be seen. Walking up the other side, that skin has been taken away to show the [muscle structure](#) underneath. A cavity opened underneath the shark shows comb-like structures along its [gills](#) that allows the shark to filter the water for food.

Another remarkable part of the exhibit is a silky shark with the skin peeled away on one side to reveal several [embryos](#) inside her abdomen.



In this Thursday, Sept. 26, 2013 photo, the body of a thresher shark is displayed during a touring exhibit, "Sea Monsters Revealed: Aquatic Bodies." The exhibit is set to open Friday, Sept. 27, at the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta. It includes the preserved bodies of 18 big sea creatures along with more than 150 individual organs and smaller animals. The bodies are preserved using a polymer preservation technique known as plastination. (AP Photo/Kate Brumback)

"These are creatures that historically, in the early days when they were first discovered, were considered monsters because early sailors who saw these animals really didn't know what they were," said aquarium spokesman Cary Rountree. "Over time, it's been revealed that they're actually some of the most marvelous animals in our ocean."

Visitors to the Georgia Aquarium can see live examples of [whale sharks](#) and devil rays, and then see how their bodies work in the new exhibit,

Rountree said.

The preserved specimens do not include animals from the Georgia Aquarium. All of the animals in the "Sea Monsters Revealed" exhibit were recovered from fisheries and other sources in accordance with animal protection standards, the aquarium says.



In this Thursday, Sept. 26, 2013 photo, the bodies of shark embryos inside a pregnant silky shark is displayed during a touring exhibit, "Sea Monsters Revealed: Aquatic Bodies." The exhibit is set to open Friday, Sept. 27, at the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta. It includes the preserved bodies of 18 big sea creatures along with more than 150 individual organs and smaller animals. The bodies are preserved using a polymer preservation technique known as plastination. (AP Photo/Kate Brumback)



In this Thursday, Sept. 26, 2013 photo, the body of a silky shark is displayed during a touring exhibit, "Sea Monsters Revealed: Aquatic Bodies." The exhibit is set to open Friday, Sept. 27, at the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta. It includes the preserved bodies of 18 big sea creatures along with more than 150 individual organs and smaller animals. The bodies are preserved using a polymer preservation technique known as plastination. (AP Photo/Kate Brumback)

The bodies are preserved using a polymer preservation technique known as plastination, which was also used on the human specimens in the "Bodies" exhibit. The process prevents decay by first replacing water and fatty materials in the cells with acetone and then with plastics, like silicone rubber, polyester or epoxy resin.

The preserved bodies are durable but must be handled carefully as parts could easily break off, Rountree said.

The Georgia Aquarium is the second stop for the exhibit, which is billed as the world's largest [exhibition](#) of plastinated sea creatures. Earlier this year it was at the Museum of Science and Industry in Tampa, Fla. It will

be open in Atlanta for at least a year, but its run may be extended based on its popularity.



In this Thursday, Sept. 26, 2013 photo, the cartilaginous skeleton of a white tipped reef shark is displayed during a touring exhibit, "Sea Monsters Revealed: Aquatic Bodies." The exhibit is set to open Friday, Sept. 27, at the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta. It includes the preserved bodies of 18 big sea creatures along with more than 150 individual organs and smaller animals. The bodies are preserved using a polymer preservation technique known as plastination. (AP Photo/Kate Brumback)

In addition to the preserved bodies, the exhibit includes a brief history of man's interaction with these great [sea creatures](#) and a number of video and text displays.

If You Go...

SEA MONSTERS REVEALED: AQUATIC BODIES: Through at least September 2014 at the Georgia Aquarium, 225 Baker St NW, Atlanta; www.georgiaaquarium.org, 404-581-4000. Open Sunday - Friday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. and on Saturdays 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. (hours vary on certain days of the year). The exhibit is included in the [aquarium](#)'s general admission and ticket prices vary according to peak and non-peak periods.

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