

Program Title: Dive into the GOT (1:30pm)

Theme: We utilize many different methods to feed the 550 animals that are in the Great Ocean Tank.

Sub-Themes:

- Lionfish are edible and would be considered a “good catch” because they are an invasive species.
- Marine Protected Areas are important for maintaining healthy fish populations and the SCA is involved in a conservation project with two MPAs off of our coast.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

*Note: Before the show, the educator will hand out feeding tools for 3-4 different feeding methods (1 must be lionfish) to the audience, and set the corresponding stuffed animals on the ledge. Depending on the audience size, we may just need to set tools on the ground and ask for audience help in matching the feeding tool to the specific animal. The educator will use their best judgement and will check in with the diver ahead of time. Use your discretion for who you give the tools out to. Try and target kids who you think would want to be a volunteer. 😊

Introduction:

Welcome guests to the SCA, introduce yourself and ask the audience where they’re from. Let them know that the GOT is the largest exhibit in the Aquarium with roughly 550 animals that call it home. Today, we will be meeting one of our volunteer divers and talking about how they take care of all these amazing animals. Introduce the diver and have them join us.

Educator: Hey diver _____! How are you doing? How is the weather inside of the tank?

Diver: Hey there! The weather is great in here! *insert temp*

Educator: Diver _____ is very special to us here at the South Carolina Aquarium because he/she is a volunteer. Who here knows what it means to be a volunteer? That’s right! He/she does not get paid! Diver _____, why do you volunteer for free? Do you enjoy it?

Diver: *Explains why he/she enjoys volunteering and what their daily role is.

Educator: We are so thankful for all of our volunteers! We have around 400 volunteers and only around 150 staff. Being a non-profit, we really rely on volunteers like Diver _____. We also rely on you guys! Every dollar spent at the aquarium goes right back into all of our education and conservation programs! Give yourself and our diver a big round of applause! Hey, _____, how deep is that tank you’re swimming around in?

Diver: The Great Ocean Tank is the deepest tank in North America at 42 feet deep. I am currently about 27 feet deep in the GOT (bottom of big window). Because of the tank being so deep, we are able to show over 40 different species native to South Carolina.

Educator: I imagine that feeding all 550 animals is quite a chore, but before we explore the different ways we feed all of the animals, how much food do we feed on average to the GOT?

Diver: We feed an average of 60 pounds of food a day to the Great Ocean Tank. As I mentioned, a part of our job as divers is preparing all of the food and feeding it to that animals. We only start feeding the animals once the divers are all out of the water so that they do not associate us divers with food.

Educator: Very cool! Ask the audience if they think we just sprinkle food on the top of the tank to feed all of the animals, like they would do with a small fish tank. Explain that if we did that, only the larger faster swimming fish at the top of the tank would get fed! During today's show, our diver is going to help us learn about different ways we feed the animals in the GOT. Let everyone know that some of our audience members are holding a few of the tools that we use. Explain that you are going to need their help to figure out which feeding tools are used to feed which animal.

Body (sub-themes)

Animal options: **Sea Turtle** (small tongs with white crate), **Shark** (long tongs), **Green Moray Eel** (grey PVC pipe), **Reef Fish** (Yellow bucket), **Lionfish** (White tube with fake spear)

Educator: I see that there are some people in the audience holding on to some of our tools that we use to feed the animals. Can whoever has the small tongs and white bin (or whatever tool you choose to talk about first) please come on down to the front? What's your name? Out of the animals we have on the ledge, which one do you think gets fed in this white bucket with small tongs? Diver ____, is sea turtle correct?

Diver: That's right! It's the sea turtle! *Explain how we feed the sea turtle while the volunteer helps "act" it out.

*Repeat this and explain each tool until you get to the last tool, the lionfish tube.

Educator: It looks like we have one more tool left... whoever is holding the big white tube, please come on down! Diver ____, this looks strange! I think I've seen this before. This doesn't look like a feeding method for any of the animals in the GOT, but rather a feeding method for me!! Is this how we catch lionfish?? Do people ever eat lionfish?

Diver: Yes! Lionfish are actually an invasive species off the coast of South Carolina! They naturally occur in the Indo-Pacific Ocean and are not supposed to be here. The problem is that they don't have any predators here and are voracious predators, eating and competing with a

lot of our native reef fish. Humans are their only predator here, so it's up to us to try and remove them from the environment. They are a delicious fish to eat, and some restaurants like Fleet Landing are serving it on their menu. If you like to eat fish and see Lionfish on the menu, it is a very sustainable choice!

Educator: That's amazing! Fleet Landing is actually a part of our Good Catch Program and is one of my favorite restaurants! Diver _____ can you tell us how divers like yourself would use this spear to fish for Lionfish?

*Use the gloves, fake spear, tube, and lionfish plush to have the volunteer act out how we catch Lionfish in the wild. Because of their venomous spines, it is very difficult to catch them via any method other than spearfishing. After spearing them, you put the fish into the tube and as you bring it back out, the flaps on the tube keeps the fish in there.

Educator: In addition to our Good Catch Program, The South Carolina Aquarium is involved in a variety of conservation projects, including a Lionfish Research Project. Diver _____ can you tell us more about this project?

Diver: Yes I can! The Lionfish Research Project is being done on two reefs off of our coast that are Marine Protected Areas, or MPAs. An MPA is any marine environment that is protected by specific federal, state, territorial, tribal, or local regulations that provide lasting protection for part or all of the natural resources in that area. Having MPAs are important for maintaining healthy fish populations off of our coast, because they are designated as spawning areas (Spawning Special Management Zones) and have highly regulated fishing laws. The SCA is doing research on both areas (called 51 and 53) to assess whether or not the removal of Lionfish affects the native fish populations. Aquarium staff and volunteer divers will be the ones routinely diving in these areas and assessing the data collecting during this 2 year project. Super cool!!

Conclusion:

Educator: Thank you for coming and supporting the South Carolina Aquarium! Supporting us in turn supports conservation projects like the one we talked about today. We hope you enjoyed learning about the Great Ocean Tank and how we feed all of the animals in it. There will be an enrichment (different everyday) at 2:00pm and a Turtle Talk right around the corner at 2:30pm. Let's give Diver ____ a huge round of applause! I'll stick around if you guys have any questions. Have a great day!