

Media Release

For immediate release

One Zodiac Cycle after Rescue, Endangered Sea Cow Thrives at Underwater World Singapore

Singapore, 13 January 2009 – Twelve years have passed since Underwater World Singapore (UWS) first rescued a stranded Sea Cow calf off the shores of Singapore. For the first time ever, UWS will grant visitors access to interact with its resident Sea Cow, Gracie, in an exclusive meet-and-greet session to herald in the Lunar New Year and to celebrate Gracie's birthday.

The Sea Cow, also known as the Dugong, is a highly endangered species similar in shape and size to the dolphin. Strictly herbivorous, Dugongs forage along the shallow coastal waters of the tropical Indo-Pacific region and feed by grazing on beds of sea grass. This behaviour and their appearance explain the name Sea Cow.

First found on 25 September 1998 beside her drowned mother, Gracie was rescued by the UWS team, who saved and relocated her to UWS with the approval of the Singapore authorities. Newborns typically stay with their mother for eighteen months and the chances of survival for this not yet weaned calf were very slim.

Despite not having any prior experience in rearing Dugongs and little data on them worldwide, UWS successfully worked out a balanced diet and created a marine environment suitable for the calf's growth and development.

This year, Gracie celebrates twelve years with her adopted parent, UWS. In conjunction with the Lunar New Year of the Cow, UWS is planning a month of birthday activities which include Meet-and-Greet sessions where visitors will get to interact with Gracie, Cake Parties to sing her birthday songs and Dive with Gracie at discounted prices. In addition, well-wishers can post their congratulatory messages online at UWS's webpage.

Dr Jeffrey Mahon, Curatorial Director of UWS, commenting on Gracie's progress, "Dugongs are highly endangered species and instances of successful rehabilitation of orphaned Dugongs are pretty rare worldwide. We are one of a handful of aquariums in the world to showcase a Dugong and we worked really hard over the years to make sure Gracie is healthy and feels at home here. We want to share that joy with everyone on her birthday. "

Mr Kwek Meng Tiam, General Manager of UWS, said this about the revamped display, "Everyone at UWS has come to love Gracie very much and we are very fortunate to be able to witness and partake in the progress of this highly endangered animal. It is double happiness for us to be able to celebrate both her birthday and the Year of the Cow together."

About UWS

UWS is a wholly owned subsidiary of Haw Par Corporation. Situated on Sentosa Island, this leisure and educational attraction showcases the rich variety of marine life to be found around the region, with educational and recreational activities available here.

The Dolphin Lagoon, an attraction of UWS houses the Indo-Pacific Humpbacked Dolphins, commonly known as pink dolphins for its coat of "bubbly" pink in contrast to the usual grey appearance of dolphins. At the "Meet-the-Dolphin" sessions, visitors can enjoy a close encounter with these adorable pink creatures.

At UWS, our mission goes beyond making our guests aware of the fascinating marine life. Our commitment to marine conservation and environmental awareness is demonstrated through our work in public education, breeding, rescue and rehabilitation, and research. UWS reinforces its environmental efforts through educational exhibits and a variety of education programmes to children and other guests. School visits are actively supported, and a number of new educational programmes are planned. UWS has also been very active in providing special programmes and assistance to the physically and mentally disabled.

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