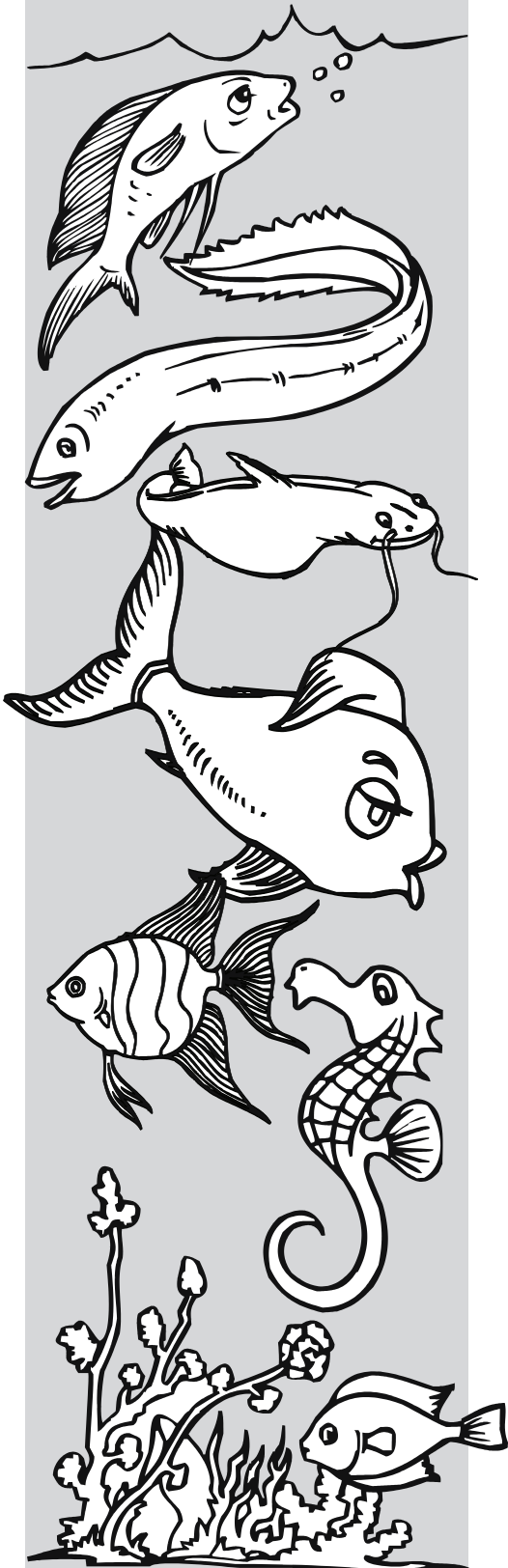


History of Aquariums



Did you know that oceans cover 70 percent of the earth's surface? Have you ever wondered what's going on deep beneath the sea? From the earliest days of civilization, people have been curious about the "wonders of the deep," and aquariums offer a fascinating glimpse at the secret life of fish and other sea creatures!

Historians tell us that ancient Sumerians (lived in the area that is now Iraq) were keeping fish in ponds for food as early as 2500 BC. The Egyptians considered some fish to be sacred, and bred certain types of fish for their beauty. The Greek philosopher Aristotle was one of the first people to study fish and record information about them. He was an early ichthyologist!

Do you know which little fish started the whole aquarium concept? It was that golden, graceful standard of every modern aquarium—the goldfish! The ancient Chinese people were the first to breed goldfish around the 10th century. These beautiful creatures became an instant hit when they were exported to Japan around 1500. Goldfish came to England in the 1600s, and became a common sight in lakes and ponds.

The first public aquarium opened in London, England in 1853. The famous circus showman P.T. Barnum opened the first American aquarium that same year in New York City. Sadly, many fish did not survive in these early aquariums. It took experts another 20 years to understand how to create the delicate environment needed to keep fish alive in tanks. Once this was understood, more aquariums began to pop up all over the United States and the world.

Today, the world's largest indoor aquarium is the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta. This massive facility holds 8 million gallons of water for 100,000 fish to frolic freely! Keeping fish in aquariums is America's second-favorite hobby after photography, and fish are just behind cats as America's most popular pet!