

# The **NATIONAL** *Aquarium*



This oldest public aquarium in America is maintained by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife (part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior) to display live specimens of food and game fishes from the inland waters of the United States.

The National Aquarium is in the lower lobby of the Department of Commerce Building, on 14th Street between Constitution Avenue and E Street, NW., Washington, D.C. The aquarium is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day except Christmas Day. Admission is free.

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
BUREAU OF SPORT FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
Circular 93 • 1960



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#### BROOK TROUT

The aquarium generally has on display about a hundred species of fresh-water fish and other aquatic animals. These comprise a selected group of the principal fresh-water game fishes of the country and a miscellaneous collection of other interesting native fishes, together with a few unusual tropical fishes and some larger aquatic reptiles and amphibians. Since the aquarium does not have facilities for salt water, marine fishes are not included.

Several kinds of trout, bass, bluegills, pike, and giant catfish are always on hand. Some of these have lived at the National Aquarium for a number of years.

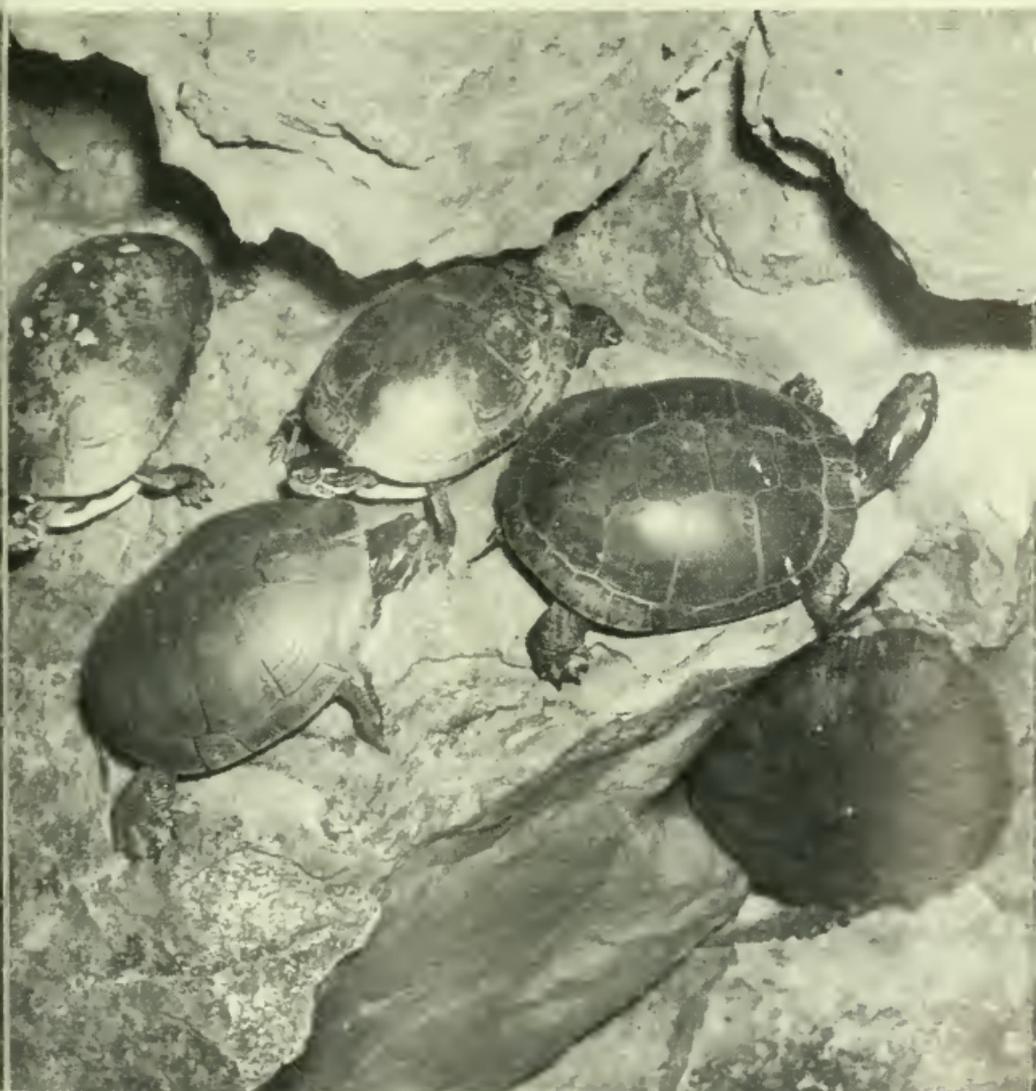
In addition to the fish groups, exhibits of interest are the giant alligator snapping turtles. These obtain their food in an unusual way, holding their jaws wide open under water while a wormlike filament of flesh attached to the tongue is waved about to attract curious fish. Also of note are the pancake-shaped soft-shelled turtles which breathe through their elongated snorkel snouts.

Many of the fish on display come from National Fish Hatcheries—the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife operates about 100 of these throughout the country. The aquarium staff also collects specimens from the wild; and by trading with other aquariums around the country (fish are sometimes shipped thousands of miles in special plastic containers supplied with oxygen) the National Aquarium adds new kinds of fish to its collection.

An effort is made to display the fishes in species groups found living together in the wild. This cannot be done in every case, for the fish must be “compatible”—it would be impractical to try to keep large bass or predaceous pickerel in a tank with shiners or other small minnows, since constant replacement of the smaller fishes would be necessary.

Around a public area about 130 by 50 feet

#### FRESH-WATER TURTLES





50-GALLON TANKS

are 47 wall display tanks 3 to 10 feet long, with water capacities of 50 to 2,000 gallons each. The tanks are aquascaped with sand, gravel, boulders, sunken logs, and water plants to resemble the bottoms of the ponds, lakes, and streams in which the fish normally live.

City water flows constantly through the tanks; chlorine is removed by activated carbon. Since the aquarium is in a large building, no heating facilities are ordinarily required for the larger tanks in winter; in summer it is necessary to cool the water to 56° in tanks containing trout and other cold-water fishes.

Most of the specimens are fed on Mondays and Thursdays at 2 p.m., when the visitor can witness more than usual activity in the tanks. The smaller fish, including the tropicals, are fed daily. Food is prepared in the aquarium's "diet kitchen." Sheep's liver, fish fillets, and natural foods for certain delicate species are the usual diet. Special new foods, such as dry compressed pellets containing vitamins, are occasionally added to the menu.



ALBINO TROUT

The National Aquarium was established in 1888 in the original Fish Commission Building at 6th and B Streets, SW., where it remained for 46 years. An immediate success, it commanded a great deal of public attention. Its success encouraged the establishment in 1893 of the famous aquarium at the Battery in

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New York City. Today there are a number of public aquariums throughout the country.

In the 1930's the new building for the Department of Commerce (which then included the Bureau of Fisheries, successor to the Fish Commission) provided for a new National Aquarium on the lower floor. The present National Aquarium was opened to the public in 1934.

#### SUNFISHES



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The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife is the Federal agency dedicated to the conservation of the Nation's fish and wildlife resources. The Bureau operates salmon, trout, and pondfish hatcheries for stocking public waters; maintains wildlife refuges; controls predatory animals; enforces Federal laws for the conservation of fish and migratory birds; and engages in fish and wildlife research and related activities.



