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## **WHAT A CROC!**

### ***National Aquarium in Baltimore Celebrates First Australian Freshwater Crocodile Hatching***

Baltimore. Oct. 4, 2004 – The National Aquarium in Baltimore has been gathering animals for its upcoming Australian exhibit *Animal Planet Australia: Wild Extremes*, set to open in 2005, for the past year. Their newest Australian animal, however, was born right at the Aquarium: a Johnston's freshwater crocodile.

The baby croc hatched after a 91-day incubation period, on Saturday, September 25. It measures about eight inches long, and its sex has not been determined. Eventually the croc will reach about six feet in length.

The Aquarium's Australian crocodiles make up the only viably compatible group in the U.S. This breeding showed that the males and females are reproductively sound, indicates that the population should be able to be successfully managed over time and taught staff more about crocodile egg incubation and juvenile rearing.

At the time of hatching, the Australian freshwater crocodile inventory for the U.S. numbered 20. Fourteen are owned by the Aquarium; the baby croc will be number 21.

This crocodile will remain at the Aquarium's off-site animal holding facility and spend its early life as an ambassador for the Australian exhibit *Animal Planet Australia: Wild Extremes* and crocodile conservation awareness. The animal will likely join the adult crocs in the Australian exhibit in about eight years, when it reaches maturity.

The National Aquarium in Baltimore, a non-profit organization, is Maryland's most exciting and popular cultural attraction, as well as one of the region's leading conservation and education resources, hosting more than 1.6 million visitors per year. The Aquarium's mission is to connect people with aquatic life in order to create a better world for both. It is dedicated to education and conservation through more than a dozen programs that serve the environment and the community.

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