

**Monday, March 16, 2009**

## **TO THE MOON, ALLYSON!**

Marine mammal researcher shortlisted as Canada's next astronaut

**Vancouver, BC:** A Vancouver Aquarium Steller sea lion named Sitka today congratulated UBC marine mammal researcher, Allyson Hindle, on being shortlisted in the Canadian Space Agency's National Astronaut Recruitment Campaign.

Sitka and Hindle have worked together since 2008 in a joint research program which attempts to explain the magnitude of the population decline of wild Steller sea lions. The program is a partnership between the Vancouver Aquarium and UBC's Marine Mammal Research Unit.

Hindle is studying the diving behaviour of Steller sea lions at the Open Water Research Station near Port Moody, BC. Her expertise in the physiology of animals living in extreme environments may inform the study of the physiology of space travel.

"I'll definitely miss the sea lions, especially Sitka," said Hindle, "But if it all works out there will be a little bit of Sitka coming with me into space".

Today's announcement means Hindle is shortlisted as one of 16 candidates and is the only female candidate chosen from more than 5300 applicants. This is only the third recruitment in Canadian history. The top two candidates will join Canada's Astronaut Corps in May 2009. The Vancouver Aquarium extends its heartiest congratulations to Allyson Hindle on her successes.

### **About the University of British Columbia Marine Mammal Research Unit:**

The unit's goals are to address questions relevant to interactions between humans and marine mammals; marine mammals as indicators of ecosystem change; the natural history, biology and conservation of marine mammals. To learn more, please visit <http://www.marinemammal.org/MMRU> .

### **About the Vancouver Aquarium:**

The Vancouver Aquarium is a self-supporting, non-profit association dedicated to effecting the conservation of aquatic life through display and interpretation, conservation practices, education, research, and direct action. To learn more, visit [www.vanaqua.org](http://www.vanaqua.org) .

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