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MATING MARKS THE BEGINNING OF THE END

VANCOUVER, B.C. – For some animals, like octopus, mating marks the beginning of the end of a lifecycle. Such was the case when Clove, a male giant Pacific octopus, was introduced to its female partner C.C. last October in the Strait of Georgia display. Clove died 67 days after mating. C.C. is being closely monitored and could soon lay nearly 100,000 eggs, of which only one or two hatchlings would be expected to survive to adulthood in their natural habitat.

“We have much to learn about the giant Pacific octopus and their mating and larval stages,” said Dr. Dennis Thoney, director of animal operations at the Vancouver Aquarium. “From the few observations, we know that octopus often fight or avoid each other following mating and we have been extremely lucky to witness it at the Vancouver Aquarium.”

Mating between an octopus pair can take some time. The giant Pacific octopus’s sperm package, also called spermatophore, can be 1 m (3 ft) long and contain up to seven billion sperm. Because of this, it can take at least an hour to deliver one spermatophore completely. They are often joined for a mating session for an average of four hours. It can also happen multiple times, sometimes over a period of days like it occurred at the Vancouver Aquarium. Mating marks the beginning of the end for octopuses.

Clove died on January 3. However, C.C is currently being monitored for signs of egg laying. Female octopuses are dedicated moms; when they cease to eat, this signals they are close to laying their eggs. C.C. will then begin to lose weight, but will focus on looking after her eggs until they hatch.

“With over 70,000 amazing creatures, the Vancouver Aquarium presents many sources of discovery and wonder—endless opportunities to connect to the natural world,” added Dr. Thoney. “Mating and reproductive behaviours are a natural part of life and this is amongst the variety of topics that can be explored within our galleries.”

A video of Clove and C.C. mating is available on the Vancouver Aquarium’s YouTube channel:

<http://www.youtube.com/vancouveraquarium#p/u/4/aSvq7GdFwvY>

About Vancouver Aquarium

The Vancouver Aquarium is a global leader in connecting people to our natural world, and a self-supporting, non-profit association dedicated to effecting the conservation of aquatic life through display, education, research, and direct action. Learn more at www.vanaqua.org.

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