

Expert in Marine Biodiversity Conservation Named Science Director for Monterey Bay Aquarium

Dr. Kyle Van Houtan, a conservation ecologist with expertise in marine biodiversity and global change, has been named director of science at the [Monterey Bay Aquarium](#).

In his new position, Van Houtan will manage, coordinate, and strengthen [the aquarium's science programs and partnerships](#). These include conservation research focused on [sea otters](#), [great white sharks](#), [Pacific bluefin tuna](#), and other iconic California Current species and ecosystems.

For the past six years, Van Houtan has led several initiatives in global change and protected species from the director's office at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) [Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center](#) in Hawai'i. His research and teaching focus on multi-faceted approaches to marine biodiversity conservation, and his work spans a range of topics from animal behavior, foraging ecology and physiology, to fisheries stock assessments, climate change and ecosystem-based management.

[His latest research paper](#) uses bomb radiocarbon from Pacific nuclear tests to aid in the conservation of critically endangered hawksbill sea turtles.

He has also spoken and written widely about issues of environmental policy and ethics.

Van Houtan earned his undergraduate degree at the University of Virginia, a master of science from Stanford University and his Ph.D. from Duke University, where he serves as an adjunct associate professor in the [Nicholas School of the Environment](#).

A passionate science and conservation communicator, his research has been featured on National Public Radio, in the New York Times, Nature, Science, National Geographic, WIRED and Smithsonian. He is also a recipient of the [Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers](#) from President Obama for his pioneering research into how climate influences sea turtle populations.

When he received the award, NOAA Fisheries Chief Science Advisor Richard Merrick, noted that Van Houtan "has shown how a deep understanding of biology, ecology, and climate science can provide answers to the important question of how climate change can affect animal populations over decades and vast geographies."

"We are fortunate to have Kyle Van Houtan as our director of science," said Margaret Spring, vice president of conservation and science, and chief conservation officer for the aquarium. "He brings new perspectives to [our work on behalf of iconic ocean wildlife](#) at a time when marine ecosystems face unprecedented challenges from climate change and ocean acidification."