

# NEWSBeat

## Reef Conference Co-Locates With Backer Christmas Show

The Chicago Marine Aquarium Society and H.H. Backer Associates hope to boost interest in the aquarium hobby with side-by-side events in October.

The Chicago Marine Aquarium Society will host a two-day conference and frag swap adjacent to H.H. Backer's Pet Industry Christmas Trade Show in the Windy City this October, giving hobbyists as well as retailers the chance to explore different aspects of fish-keeping without having to leave the building.

"We're pleased to be working with CMAS to bring this great event to Chicago," said Colette Fairchild, trade show director for H.H. Backer Associates Inc. (Chicago). "The idea seemed like a natural fit because it offers a wider variety of exhibits and events that will appeal to serious hobbyists and retail aquatic attendees alike."

The dynamic weekend will kick off on Friday, Oct. 2, at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont (Chicago), Ill., with H.H. Backer's 43rd Annual Pet Industry Christmas Trade Show and Educational Conference. The trade show once again will feature a dedicated Aquatic Answers hall, Ask the Expert sessions, a panel discussion focusing on aquatics industry trends and issues, and a problem-solving seminar hosted by Patrick Donston.

The World Reef Conference will start on Saturday, Oct. 3, in the exhibit hall adjacent to Backer's Aquatic Answers hall. The conference will feature workshops, a frag fest and swap, a livestock auction and cutting-edge seminars led by industry experts such as Julian Sprung, Eric Borneman, Marc Levenson and Jeff Turner.

Registered trade show attendees will be able to visit the World Reef Conference hall as guests on Sunday. Likewise, registered reef conference attendees will be able to visit Backer's Aquatics Answers hall on Sunday. Other trade show exhibits will be off-limits to reef conference attendees at all times during the weekend.

"Our whole goal [in co-locating with the World Reef Conference] is to generate interest in the aquarium hobby. New interest in the hobby is good for hobbyists, it's good for retailers and it's good for everyone," Fairchild said.

"Some retailers [may be] fearful that the public [will] come in and get items at whole-



People of all ages will get to explore different aspects of fish-keeping when the Chicago Marine Aquarium Society's World Reef Conference co-locates with H.H. Backer's 43rd Annual Pet Industry Christmas Trade Show in Chicago in October.

sale prices," she added. "That's simply not the case. We'll help hobbyists find products they're interested in, and then we'll help them find those products at local retail stores. Everyone will have distinct badges, so guests will be easily identifiable. It's not our goal to undercut retailers. We want to direct those hobbyists into retail stores."

Toward that end, Backer will provide participating hobbyists with lists of aquarium stores in the area. "What retailers need to understand is that we're trying to drive those hobbyists into their stores," Fairchild said.

Saltwater enthusiasts from all over the Midwest are expected to attend the World Reef Conference, said Boyd Corbett, president of CMAS. "Since the Backer show is one of the most important pet industry events of the year, attendees and vendors for both events will have the opportunity to network and share expertise not available at any other aquatic event," he said.

Special features of the two-day World Reef Conference include:

- ◆ A children's area, designed to introduce a new generation to the hobby.
- ◆ The "build a reef ball" area, where

attendees can make miniature versions of the artificial reef modules the nonprofit Reef Ball Foundation uses to rehabilitate ecosystems.

◆ Raffles on Saturday and Sunday, featuring prizes donated by vendors in the World Reef Conference hall as well as Backer show exhibitors.

◆ A behind-the-scenes tour of the newly re-imagined Shedd Aquarium in downtown Chicago.

A reciprocal discount will be available for vendors that exhibit in both events. "It's a great way for vendors to reach both market segments and save money on exhibition and travel expenses versus attending two separate events, especially in challenging economic times," Fairchild said.

For information on exhibiting in the Backer show, contact Julie Wichert at [jwichert@hhbacker.com](mailto:jwichert@hhbacker.com) or 312-578-1818.

For information on attending or exhibiting at the World Reef Conference, contact Boyd Corbett at [boyd@cmas.net](mailto:boyd@cmas.net) or 847-421-2413.

For other details, including hotel and travel information, conference speakers and more, go to [www.hhbacker.com](http://www.hhbacker.com) or [www.worldreef-conference.com](http://www.worldreef-conference.com).