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See Seals and Birds on Maritime Aquarium Long Island Sound Cruises, Starting Dec 10

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Cruise out onto Long Island Sound for the chance to see some of the seals and waterfowl that spend their winter just off our shores on one of the seal-spotting and birding cruises organized by The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk.

— *an announcement from the Maritime Aquarium*

These invigorating 2½-hour outings take place aboard the Aquarium's R/V Spirit of the Sound, the country's only research vessel with hybrid-electric propulsion.

Initial dates for the 2016-17 season are Sat., Dec. 10 at 1 p.m. and Sun., Dec. 11 at 2 p.m., with 17 more outings through March 26. (Dates and departure times vary by low tide. For the full schedule, go to [the Maritime Aquarium website.](#))

The cruises seek out the harbor seals and gray seals that migrate down into the Sound from northern waters, which serve as their summer breeding and pupping areas. The seals often can be seen near the Norwalk islands when they “haul out” to rest on rocks exposed at low tide.

Aquarium educators will point out these federally protected marine mammals and talk about their natural histories. And they’ll also generally discuss what happens to the Sound’s marine population during the winter: who stays, who migrates out, and who migrates in (besides the seals).

“As exciting as it is to get close to the seals inside The Maritime Aquarium, it’s truly a memorable experience to see seals out in Long Island Sound,” said Aquarium spokesman Dave Sigworth.

“Those encounters inspire us to take actions that protect the health of the Sound, after witnessing it as a habitat for our marine-mammal friends and all the other creatures that call it home.”

The Aquarium cruises also give birders unique “on-the-water” access to see and photograph visiting winter waterfowl, such as buffleheads, mergansers, Brant geese and long-tailed ducks.

Plus, cruise participants can help Aquarium educators with plankton samplings. Data collected during the cruises is added to the Long Island Sound Biodiversity Project, which is an ongoing census of the Sound’s animal species.

This online database is sponsored by the Aquarium and includes students in collecting data on the physical and biological contents of Long Island Sound.

Binoculars will be provided. R/V Spirit of the Sound has a climate-controlled cabin but, because the best viewing is outside on the deck, participants should bring plenty of warm clothes.

The cruises offer memorable family fun but please note that all passengers must be at least 42 inches tall.

Tickets for a Seal-Spotting & Birding Cruise are \$29.95, or \$24.95 for Aquarium members.

Capacity is limited so advance reservations are strongly recommended. Walk-up tickets will be sold, space

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permitting.

Reserve your spot by calling (203) 852-0700, ext. 2206, or by going to [the aquarium website](#).