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Fact Sheet

Giant Squid

There are many strange and wonderful things to see in the Sant Ocean Hall, but perhaps none as mysterious and thrilling as the giant squid (*Architeuthis*). Live giant squid have eluded humans and very little is known about them, inspiring many myths and legends. None had been seen alive until 2004. Visitors to the new hall, however, have the chance to see not one, but two giant squid up-close.

The larger of the two is a 24-foot female specimen displayed below the North Atlantic right whale in the center of the hall, and is one of the largest completely intact squid ever found. She is suspended in 1,800 gallons of a special nontoxic clear liquid called Novec fluid developed by 3M Company. The male, much smaller than the female at nine feet long, is displayed close by and is also preserved in the Novec fluid.

The Sant Ocean Hall is the only place in the world to display of both a male and female squid in the same exhibition.

Both squid were captured in nets more than 1,300-feet below the surface off the Atlantic coast of Spain during separate fishing expeditions in 2005. They are on loan to the Smithsonian Institution from the Coordinadora para el Estudio y la Protección de las Especies Marinas in Spain.

Getting them to Washington was no easy feat. After their capture, they were stored in Europe until the tanks in Washington, D.C., were completed. The squid were wrapped in special blankets and crated in preservative. The crates were not as large as the specimens so the tentacles were folded over the body. The 326th Airlift Squadron of the U. S. Air Force brought the squid to America in a C-17 Globemaster III cargo plane. They arrived on July 14, 2008, at the Dover Air Force Base in Dover, Del., before being transported in a truck by the 436th Aerial Port Squadron to the Museum of Natural History. Squid specialists from Spain came to the Smithsonian to assist with preparation of the squid for exhibit.

Giant squid are thought to be the world's largest invertebrates possibly reaching sizes up to 60 feet. There is still much for scientists to discover about this mysterious species.

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