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Headline: Fish with chips a hit at Underwater World

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STILL trying to find Nemo? Sentosa's Underwater World may not be able to help you there, but it can now tell visitors the name of that fish swimming by, and its species, too. About 20 fish in its Living Fossil exhibit have been microchip-tagged. They have also been given names like Kurt and Brock.

The exhibits range from the arapaima, which can grow up to 3m and is related to the arowana fish, to the pacu, a less bloodthirsty cousin of the piranha.

When a particular fish swims past a sensor on the glass panel, information about the fish is displayed on an LCD touchscreen placed next to the exhibit, with the help of special software developed by engineers from the Institute of Technical Education.



This display includes the fish's name, its species, the origin of the species and other general facts. The touchscreen has proved a hit with visitors. "It's good. I can use it to teach my daughter to read," said tourist Mark Carless, 40, from Britain.

The microchips use a technology called radio frequency identification (RFID). Underwater World is the first aquarium in the world to use RFID for its exhibits. It spent three months and \$30,000 to complete the project.

Curatorial director Jeffrey Mahon said the system would also help the Underwater World accurately track the medical records of the fish, since some fish may look alike. Underwater World is considering using the RFID system next for its shark tank, which has a traveller around it for visitors.

How tagging is done.

A fish is taken out of its tank and placed on a flat surface. For large fish like the arapaima, which can leap up to 2m above the water, the tank is drained instead.

A small cut is made near the dorsal fin with a scalpel. A microchip, housed in a glass casing 3.2cm long, is injected. The process takes less than a minute.

The fish is moved to a recovery tank for five to 10 minutes. Both the environment and equipment are kept sterile to prevent infection.

As the microchips do not need batteries, they can last indefinitely.