

Octopus slips out of aquarium tank, crawls across floor, escapes down pipe to ocean

By **Karin Brulliard** April 13

Inky the octopus didn't even try to cover his tracks.

By the time the staff at New Zealand's National Aquarium noticed that he was missing, telltale suction cup prints were the main clue to an easily solved mystery.

Inky had said see ya to his tank-mate, slipped through a gap left by maintenance workers at the top of his enclosure and, as evidenced by the tracks, made his way across the floor to a six-inch-wide drain. He squeezed his football-sized body in — octopuses are very malleable, aquarium manager Rob Yarrall [told the New Zealand website Stuff](#) — and made a break for the Pacific.

“He managed to make his way to one of the drain holes that go back to the ocean. And off he went,” Yarrall [told Radio New Zealand](#). “And he didn't even leave us a message.”

The cephalopod version of “Shawshank Redemption” took place three months ago, but it only became public Tuesday. Inky, who already had some local renown in the coastal city of Napier, quickly became a global celebrity cheered on by strangers.

All animals want to live free. Bravo to Inky the Octopus for breaking out of aquarium jail!

<https://t.co/CybcotuSBt> pic.twitter.com/LMC6tulUVm

— *Animal Justice (@AnimalJusticeC)* [April 12, 2016](#)

Inky had resided at the aquarium since 2014, when he was taken in after being caught in a crayfish pot, his body scarred and his arms injured. The octopus's name was chosen from nominations submitted to a contest run by the Napier City Council.

Kerry Hewitt, the aquarium's curator of exhibits, [said at the time](#) that Inky was “getting used to being at the aquarium” but added that staff would “have to keep Inky amused or he will get bored.”

Guess that happened.

This isn't the first time a captive octopus decided to take matters into its own hands — er, tentacles. In 2009, after a two-spotted octopus at the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium in California took apart a water recycling valve, directed a tube to shoot water out of the tank for 10 hours and caused a massive flood, Scientific American [asked octopus expert](#) Jennifer Mather about the animals' intelligence and previous such hijinks at aquariums.

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“They are very strong, and it is practically impossible to keep an octopus in a tank unless you are very lucky. ... Octopuses simply take things apart,” Mather said. “I recall reading about someone who had built a robot submarine to putter around in a large aquarium tank. The octopus got a hold of it and took it apart piece by piece. There’s a famous story from the Brighton Aquarium in England 100 years ago that an octopus there got out of its tank at night when no one was watching, went to the tank next door and ate one of the lumpfish and went back to his own tank and was sitting there the next morning.”

Yarrall said the aquarium has no plans to replace Inky, but it does intend to better secure the tank where now just one octopus remains.

“They are always exploring and they are great escape artists,” Yarrall said, according to [Hawke’s Bay Today](#). “We’ll be watching the other one.”

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