

SHARK RESEARCH INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

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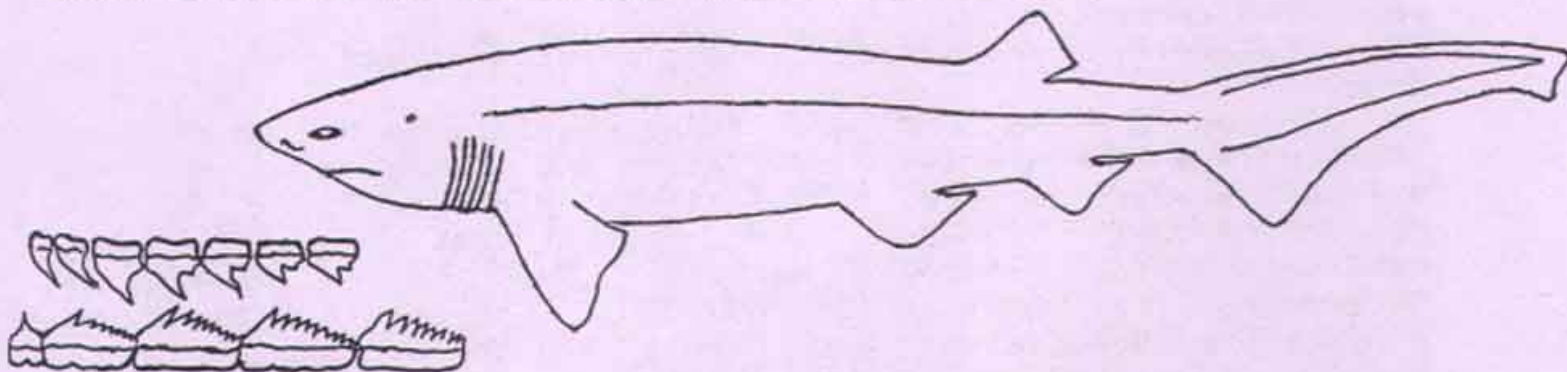
SIXGILL SHARK - Hexanchus griseus

Most sharks have five gill slits, but the sixgill shark has six gill slits. The shark also has a single dorsal fin, a broad head and six rows of large broad, comb-shaped teeth on each side of its lower jaw. (A similar species discovered in 1969, the bigeye sixgill shark Hexanchus vitulus, has five rows of teeth on each side of its lower jaw.)

It is a large stout-bodied shark; a 13' shark weighed 528 lbs and a 15' shark weighed 1,300 lbs. The shark is dark gray or brown above with a pale belly, coloration commonly found in a shark that hunts near the surface. The shark often visits surface waters after dusk, but by day it is usually found at depths of 1,200 to 3,600 feet.

The shark inhabits temperate and tropical seas; off North America it has been found from British Columbia to California, and from North Carolina to Florida and the Gulf of Mexico. Although somewhat sluggish, it is a strong swimmer and feeds on a wide variety of marine organisms, including crustaceans, other sharks, small marlin, swordfish and seals.

Females are thought to reach sexual maturity at a length of 14.9'. Development is ovoviviparous and litters of 108 pups have been reported. At birth, pups measure 24" to 28".



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NEW FEDERAL RESTRICTIONS ON SHARK FISHING IMPOSED

The National Marine Fisheries Service, at long last, has issued restrictions on fishing for 39 major shark species. Restrictions apply to commercial fishermen along the U.S. coastline from Maine to Texas and out to the 200-mile

international limit, and set bag limits for sports anglers. Among other restrictions, the plan stops the practice of "finning," catching sharks only to cut off their fins for shark fin soup and other delicacies. In addition, the government also may order a halt to commercial catches of some large coastal shark species, including the great white, tiger and blacktip.

Conservationists, who have pushed for a decade to get the restrictions, said they are a big step -- but that a plan for the West Coast, and ultimately international restrictions, are also necessary. "Sharks do not recognize federal boundaries, and yet they are sought by fisheries worldwide," said Sonja Fordham, spokeswoman for the Center for Marine Conservation.

Beginning in the 1970s, the market for shark meat expanded as U.S. consumers switched from beef to fish. In the mid 1980s, China -- where shark fins are highly prized -- opened its markets and the demand for shark fins went through the roof.

Leading marine biologists, including Samuel Gruber of the University of Miami, began reporting the disappearance of some shark species in coastal areas. "High-tech fishing gear catches everything," Gruber said. "Ecologically, sharks are perhaps the most important creatures in the ocean, more important than whales. Sharks, as the top predators, guide the evolution of lower fish, just as cougars, lions and other predators do on land," he said.

Restrictions include:

- Commercial quotas for large coastal species, as well as deep-water sharks such as blues, makos and threshers, with fisheries to be closed when quotas are reached.

- Limiting vessels to landing fins only in proportion to the carcasses aboard.

- Recreational bag limits of four sharks per fishing vessel per trip for larger coastal and deep-water species.

- Recreational bag limits of five sharks per person per day for small coastal sharks, such as sharp nosed, which are not regulated commercially.

- Requiring commercial fishing permits within the 200-mile zone.

Copies of the FMP and final regulations may be obtained from: Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1335 East-West Highway, Silver Springs, MD 20910 (301) 713-2347 - or - Southeast Regional Office, National Marine Fisheries Service, 9450 Koger Blvd., St Petersburg, FL 33702 (813) 893-3161. For permit information, contact the Regulations and Permit Branch at the Southeast Regional Office in St Petersburg (813) 893-3722.

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MEMBERS' BOOKSHELF

SURFING WITH THE GREAT WHITE SHARK by survivor Kenny Doubt. Shark Bite Publishing. P.O. Box 3588, Lihue, HI 96766. \$8.95 plus \$2 shipping and handling (credit card order 1-800-444-2524, ext-214).

On November 27, 1979, surfer Kenny Doubt was attacked by a great white shark near Cannon Beach, Oregon. The author describes his attack, emergency treatment and recovery. This book should be required reading for surfers, lifesavers, and marine biologists. 88pp.

FROM THE CAGE

Dr Leonard Compagno has joined SRI's Board. A graduate of Stanford University, Dr Compagno is the Director of the Shark Research Center at the South African Museum in Cape Town. He authored Sharks of the World, a two-volume species catalogue for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and co-authored (with Dr Malcolm Smale and Dr Dave Ebert) Guide to the Sharks and Rays of Southern Africa. In addition, Dr Compagno has written more than 50 scientific papers, popular articles and chapters for books.

SRI Director Marie Levine presented a paper titled "Unprovoked Attacks by White Sharks off the South African Coast 1922 to 1991" at Biology of the White Shark, a symposium held at Bodega Marine Laboratory, University of California, March 4-7, 1993.

Visitors to Beneath the Sea 1993, the 17th Annual New York Oceans Exposition and International Underwater Film Festival, expanded their knowledge about sharks. Throughout the three-day symposium/workshops/film festival (March 26-28, 1993) they met SRI Board members Drs Maurice Coutts and Marie Levine who presented lectures/slides/videos on Sharks and Shark Attacks and How to Film Bull Sharks Without Being Bitten.

There has been considerable traffic of late between Princeton and Australia: In February, Sandy Levine and Stan Waterman filmed white sharks at Dangerous Reef. They are busy editing 13 hours of footage for a public television production. Maurice Coutts is documenting behavior of whale sharks at Ningaloo Reef and will return early next month.

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SHARK-POWERED BOAT?

"A whaling vessel having been destroyed by fire at sea, its crew was ultimately saved by a shark. After drifting about for five days, during which the rations gave out, and several of the crew died from exposure and the delirium produced by drinking sea water, a shark rose to attack the body of the latest dead man. The captain promptly harpooned the shark, and while its strength lasted, used it as a substitute for rowing of the crew, and after its draft powers were exhausted the shark was made to furnish edibles and drinkables for the crew." ...The Savage World: a Complete Natural History of the World's Creatures by J.W. Buel, Historical Publishing Co, Philadelphia, 1889.

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GLOBAL SHARK ATTACK FILE

In March 1993 it was proposed that the Shark Research Institute publish a periodic update on shark attacks worldwide that would be made available to universities, hospital libraries, and marine research facilities. The primary objective of the

publication is the creation of an accurate data base which can be readily accessed by researchers; to counter "Jaws" hype quantifiable facts are needed.

Because such information is difficult and time-consuming to obtain (and because scientists have a need to publish on a regular basis) it was decided that each shark/human encounter should be examined individually (i.e. author-investigator/s report a single attack). However, because there may be more than one attack in a locality, author-investigator/s may have multiple submissions.

Please send reports to: Global Shark Attack File, Shark Research Institute, P.O. Box 40, Princeton, NJ 08540, USA. FAX: 609/921-1505.

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