

# SHARK RESEARCH INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

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## Global Shark Attack File....

Last year there were 29 nonfatal shark attacks in Florida. On Tuesday May 7th, Jimmy Grunewald, a 27-year-old surfer from Mount Dora, Florida, became Florida's first shark attack victim of the current season. The incident took place just after 11h00 in Shark Shallows, Ponce Inlet, Florida. Grunewald was surfing when his left foot and leg were bitten by a two-to three-foot blacktip or spinner shark. The shark made a single bite, shook the surfer's foot, then let go. Grunewald was able to stem the bleeding and drive to Fish Memorial Hospital in New Smyrna Beach where the wound was closed with 24 sutures. "This is the time of year when large numbers of bait fish move into the warmer waters close to shore, and the bait fish are followed by juvenile sharks into the surf line," reported Joe Wooden, deputy chief of the Volusia County Beach Department.

Two attacks were reported by Florida diver, Gail Nansen. In July, Carol Diliberto (63) was just 15 yards from shore in three feet of water at the southern end of Siesta Key Public Beach in Sarasota, Florida, when her foot was bitten by a small nurse shark. Injuries sustained by Michael Beach (24), were more serious. He was diving from a 60-ft sailing vessel at Cat Cay in the Bahamas on July 4th when his left leg was bitten by a shark. The US Coast Guard dispatched a helicopter from Miami with a medical corpsman on board, picked up the diver at Cat Cay (approximately 40 miles east of Miami), and transported him to Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami, Florida.

Mike Williams, SRI field volunteer and marine biologist, is investigating these and other Florida/Bahamas/Caribbean shark attacks for SRI.

## Update...

Marie Levine field-tested the Mackler Shark Attractant and reports that it works well. She was also scheduled to test the Sharkpod, an electronic shark repellent, but the manufacturer failed to provide the device for field tests scheduled in June in the Coral Sea. To date, the manufacturer has not sent the device or asked to reschedule the tests. Word is, the manufacturer has decided not to market the Sharkpod in the United States.

## Fundraising...

Magellan Systems Corporation, manufacturer of GPS position and navigation products, recently became a sponsor of SRI. We are grateful for their support.

## Public Education...

In our last issue we reported that on May 19th SRI had a booth at *Discover the Undersea Realm*, an educational event hosted by Northeast Dive Journal. Our booth, was staffed by Keith and Teresa Markey, and they did a great job in publicizing the



whale shark tagging program -- application forms that they distributed at the show are still coming in!

The cover story of the Central/South American dive magazine, *Espacio Profundo*, features the Shark Research Institute's whale shark tagging program. The magazine ran a full-color 5-page article that has stirred a lot of interest in the program, particularly in Mexico and the Caribbean.

Marcia and Ken McMahan and Video Alternative Corporation producer Lisa Morreale have produced two videos for members that want to do a presentation on sharks: *A Diver's Guide to Sharks* (20 minutes), and *SOS - Save Our Sharks* (10 minutes). Both videos are slide presentations narrated by Marcia, and they may be borrowed from HQ.

SABC-TV produced a documentary about SRI's Whale Shark Tagging Project. The film features interviews with Andrew Gifford, Rob Allen, Sue Smith, and Stephen Hoseck, the Natal Parks Board ranger at Cape Vidal. Viewers see an entire tagging sequence: spotting the sharks from the microlight, directing the boat to the shark, and a diver tagging a shark. Sue explains how to read the information on a tag, and Rob takes the viewer through development of the tagging applicator. Computer animation is used to show how the sharks feed, and suggests an explanation as to why they strand along the South African-Mozambique coast. The film, produced by Ross Douglas, was shown at the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia. Copies of the video are available at HQ.

August 11-18 is Shark Week on the Discovery Channel. If you miss a program during the week all episodes will be rebroadcast on Sunday August 18th, from 1-8 p.m.

### **Whale Shark Study...**

Renate Horn, based in Kuwait, learned of SRI's Whale Shark Study when she attended ADEC'96 in Singapore in late May 1996. During the past two months she has organized a cadre of divers to work on the Study in the Persian Gulf. One of her team, Joe Lubjec, went to South Africa in early July, met with Andrew Gifford, and brought back tagging applicators, tags, sighting cards, and other material.

Renate and her husband, Martin, are using Drager rebreathers -- no exhaust bubbles -- and report that they are able to approach fish (including sharks) much more easily than with SCUBA. (Incidentally, Martin runs a dive school and needs to hire 1 or 2 more SCUBA instructors. If you know any instructors that want to work in Kuwait/Persian Gulf area, call HQ and we will put you in touch with the Horns.)

The Horns recently sent press clippings to HQ regarding a 7-metre whale shark that remained beneath an oil loading dock at Ahmadi Port in the Persian Gulf. The water depth was 20 metres, and after three days of apparent captivity, the shark disappeared.

James Cervino, Woods Hole marine biologist/diver/writer and SRI Field Volunteer has taken SRI whale shark tags for use in Papua New Guinea. Whale sharks tagged in PNG will sport a pale green tag with a 1-inch red band, and tagging operations are being videotaped by Kathryn Winiarski, photojournalist and underwater videographer.

In November, whale shark taggers Rob Allen and Sue Smith and Andrew Gifford, Director of SRI's African Operations, will be working with David Rowat in the Seychelles. In addition to teaching divemasters how to tag whale sharks, Rob and Sue will present seminars at *Subios*, the annual Indian Ocean Dive Festival hosted by the Seychelles. The training program is being funded (in part) by Seychelles Underwater



Centres and Project A.W.A.R.E. Foundation. Curtis and Sharon Bok, who have been gathering data on shark attacks throughout Indonesia for SRI's databank, plan to join the project in the Seychelles.

Whale shark sighting cards are being distributed to dive resorts in the Indian Ocean, Pacific, Malaysia and Indonesia, and will shortly be available on the World Wide Web. Look for them at: <http://www.njscuba.com/Sharks/>.

### **The 46-Year Debate is Ended....**

Whale sharks' mode of reproduction became a subject of controversy in 1953 when a very large egg case was brought up in a trawl net in the Gulf of Mexico. The egg case contained a 14.5-inch [38.8 cm] whale shark embryo, which led to speculation that whale sharks were oviparous (egg laying sharks). Last year a team of scientists from the National Taiwan Ocean University had an opportunity to examine a 35-ft. female whale shark that had been harpooned by a Taiwanese fisherman. Her twin uteruses contained 300 embryos ranging in size from 16 to 25 inches in length -- proof that the embryos emerge from egg cases while still inside the mother's body. Of the 300 embryos, 15 were still alive and ready to be born. One pup was put on display at Okinawa Expo Aquarium. On June 16th, at the American Elasmobranch Society meeting, a paper by S.J. Joung, C. Che-Tsung, Eugenie Clark and Senzo Uchida was presented that detailed the findings in the pregnant shark.

### **Members Bookshelf...**

Biology of the White Shark, due to be released by Academic Press in October, is a comprehensive reference volume on the biology of the white shark. The 600-page book includes 47 chapters on a wide range of topics including species distribution, evolution, population dynamics, behavior, and interactions with humans. Several of our members have contributed chapters to the tome: Gordon Hubbell authored Chapter 3, "Using tooth structure to determine the evolutionary history of the white shark"; Leonard Compagno co-authored Chapter 7, "Size and skeletal anatomy of the giant 'megatooth shark', *Carcharodon megalodon*"; Mark Marks co-authored Chapter 19, "White shark attacks on inanimate objects from the Pacific coast of North America"; Jeremy Cliff co-authored both Chapter 32 "Environmental influences on catches of white sharks in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, and Chapter 36, "Tagging of great white sharks provides first estimates of mortality and population size on the South African coast"; and Marie Levine authored Chapter 40, "Unprovoked attacks by white sharks off the South African coast." The book is expected to sell between \$50 and \$80.

#### *Other recommended titles:*

Discovering Sharks, edited by Samuel H. Gruber, available from the American Littoral Society, Sandy Hook, Highlands, NJ 07732. 122 pages. \$10.00

Surfing with the Great White Shark, by Kenny Doudt, available from Shark Bite Publishing, PO Box 121, Bryan, Ohio. 43506. 88 pages. \$8.95 plus \$2 shipping.

Great White Shark, by Richard Ellis and John McCosker, available from HarperCollins Publishers, 10 E. 53rd St. New York, NY. 270 pages. \$50.00





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**PLEASE VOTE...**

There is a proposal before the Shark Research Institute's Board of Trustees to change the Articles of Incorporation of the Institute. If passed, our purpose will not change, but we will be a public service organization instead of a membership organization. If passed, members would still receive the quarterly newsletter, but there would be no more annual meetings of the membership and members would make optional donations instead of paying annual dues.

The reason for the change is two-fold:

1. We have many potential members for whom the present fee structure presents financial difficulty, in particular those individuals residing in third world or developing countries. Much of our field research is taking place in such areas while greater numbers of the local population would like to become members of the Institute, exchange rates makes our current membership fees prohibitively expensive.
2. It will simplify bookkeeping; membership organizations are high maintenance and we are staffed by volunteers.

Please check only one box and send your response to P.O. Box 40, Princeton, NJ 08540 by September 3rd:

- I would like the Shark Research Institute to remain a membership organization.
- I would like the Shark Research Institute to be a public service organization.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_