

# SHARK RESEARCH INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

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## From Africa...

Andrew Gifford, Director of African Operations, reports that 20 more whale sharks have been tagged: 19 off Mozambique and one in South Africa. In the space of two years SRI has tagged a total of 50 whale sharks. Very impressive, particularly when you consider that by 1987 there had been only 320 recorded sightings of this species in all of Western Scientific literature!

Andrew also reports that he is in communication with Dr. Jeremy Colman of the Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management who is currently heading up both ecotourism development and the whale shark research at Ningaloo Marine Park. Dr. Colman is considering using SRI's passive tagging system but with tags of a different color code.

## Members' Bookshelf...

If you are a whale shark aficionado you won't want to miss Whale Sharks, The Giants of Ningaloo Reef. Author Geoff Taylor's descriptions and photographs evoke his experience with these huge and elusive creatures over the past ten years, and provide a fascinating insight into a part of Australia that few people have ever seen -- the stark beauty of North-West Cape and the tropical abundance of Ningaloo Reef. Copies are available from The Nature Company for \$25.00 or from the publisher: HarperCollins, 10 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022, USA.

## Congratulations...

... To William L. Bunting, Jr. Esq, who was elected to SRI's Board in November.  
... To Rob Allen for achieving his license to fly SRI's microlight. Thanks to Rob the whale shark team will be able to increase their numbers of aerial surveys.  
... To Andrew and Pam Gifford on becoming grandparents. Their son, Grearson, and daughter-in-law, Haley, had a daughter in November. Andrew reports baby Michaela is the most fussed over infant in the whole of the country. She is very pretty, he proudly tells us, but difficult to hold because "all of her body parts wobble."

## From South Africa...

The Natal Sharks Board has long admitted that their "anti-shark" gill nets kill large numbers of dolphins (including rare humpback dolphins), sea turtles and harmless sharks; only a small percentage of the sharks caught in their nets are dangerous species. In the past decade increasing criticism of NSB's nets

by anglers, conservationists and ecologists has led that organization to explore alternative means of "protecting" the public from sharks. Last summer NSB announced production of their POD (Protective Oceanic Device) would start in October 1995. They reported that field tests of the coffee-mug size battery-operated device, which surrounds the wearer within a 120-volt electric field, proved to be effective in repelling white sharks, bull sharks, tiger sharks and mako sharks. Each POD, according to NSB officials, would retail for \$150.00 -- inexpensive compared to the \$16 million annual cost billed to taxpayers for maintenance of the "anti-shark" nets. October came and went without any appearance of the great POD, and we just received an announcement that NSB has been awarded a \$2,730,000.00 contract to install "anti-shark" nets off Hong Kong.

### **Global Shark Attack File.**

Case 2315: At 5:30 p.m. on Friday, September 29, 1995, a windsurfer, Mike Sullivan, was attacked by a 12' to 15' shark just north of Davenport Landing, Santa Cruz, California. Sullivan, who was unhurt, managed to swim ashore, but his board was pocked with teeth marks.

In November Marie Levine, while working in the Kingdom of Tonga, documented eight attacks from 1958 to 1995. Data was gathered from newspaper archives, and she interviewed victims, witnesses and medical personnel for additional details.

### **Public Education...**

In October NBC-TV Producer, Joe DeCola, contacted SRI for material regarding shark attacks in Florida, and we provided video and data for his documentary production.

On November 9th Marie Levine gave a presentation to the Princeton Scuba Club: her topic, Sport Diver Participation in SRI's Whale Shark Tagging Program. On November 19th she was a guest on the Suzanne Dragan Talk Show on WCTC/WMCQ, Central New Jersey's radio station. On January 10th she will be the featured speaker at the Princeton Old Guard meeting at Princeton University.

### **If you would like to (cage) dive with white sharks...**

SRI member and International Nikon Award underwater photographer Amos Nachoum will be filming white sharks in Mossel Bay, South Africa, from March 18 to 28th, and Marie Levine will be working with the sharks at the same location April 20 to 30th. Both have spaces on their boats. Total cost for diving/accommodations/meals/transfers is \$3,200. If you would like to join Amos or Marie, please phone HQ at (609) 921-3522 or contact Kathy Rothschild at 1-800-359-0747.