

# Shark Research Institute



## Newsletter

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### Key Largo White Shark

On January 6<sup>th</sup> newspapers across the USA reported that a 16', 2,000-lb (estimated) white shark was caught off Key Largo, Florida. "To say the least it was a circus," reports Dr Gordon. Hubbell, who, together with Dr. Jose Castro, dissected the shark. "There were media all over the place, and I think that everyone in the upper Keys was there. In fact, there were so many people that the police had to block off all of the nearby streets... By the time we got to (dissecting) the shark it was 7 pm and dark, so they loaded the shark onto a dump truck and pulled up under a street light. I bought the jaw from the fisherman so at least we saved it for future research. The jaw was fairly good-sized, but the teeth were small. This jaw is in contrast to another male (caught off St. Petersburg, Florida in 1994) that measured 15'6.5" and



had a large jaw and very large teeth.

"The Key Largo shark was caught by accident. It was not hooked. In fact, if it were hooked it could have easily gotten off. The fisherman was using monofilament leader and long-shanked hooks that would have easily straightened out. The shark apparently swam by the long line, got caught in it and rolled up in the line. He was really tangled up... (He) was an impressive shark!"

### NMFS proposed rule changes to the Atlantic Shark Fishery Management Plan

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has proposed changes to the regulations

### Inside This Issue

- 3 Whale shark dive trips offered
- 4 Members' bookshelf
- 5 Whale shark bibliography on the Web
- 6 White shark chumming restricted
- 6 Sharks on the ICUN Red List

governing the Atlantic shark fisheries that would reduce commercial quotas and recreational bag limits; establish a quota for small coastal sharks; prohibit direct commercial fishing for, and landing or sale of, five species of sharks; establish a recreational tag-and-release-only fishery for white sharks, prohibit filleting of sharks at sea; and require boat owners and operators, dealers and tournament operators to identify the species of all sharks landed under the framework provisions of the Fishery Management Plan for Sharks of the Atlantic Ocean (FMP). The proposed rule is based in part on recommendations of the 1994 and 1996 Shark Evaluation Workshops, the 1995 Shark Evaluation Report, and comments received during a series of public meetings held by NMFS to receive comments from fishery participants and the public.

#### *Commercial Quotas*

Large coastal sharks were determined to be overfished. The quota which became effective 1 January 1994 is not reducing the mortality and NMFS has determined that the quota should be reduced by 50% to rebuild stocks.

#### *Recreational Bag Limits*

NMFS has determined that certain species of sharks should be excluded from directed fishing due to their vulnerability to overfishing and/or their slow reproductive and growth rates. NMFS proposes to remove the

whale shark *Rhincodon typus*, the basking shark *Cetorhinus maximus*, the sand tiger *Odontaspis (Carcharias) taurus*, and the bigeye sand tiger, *Odontaspis noronhai* from the Large Coastal Species Group and make them Prohibited Species.

Concern about the potential for development of a commercial fishery for the white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*, prompted NMFS to propose its removal from the Large Coastal Species Group and make it a Commercially Prohibited Species.

An active recreational fishery for white sharks exists and NMFS proposes to restrict this fishery to tag-and-release-only, provided that the fishermen participate in a NMFS-approved tag-and-release program. Tags may be obtained through the APEX Predator Investigation Cooperative Shark Tagging Program, 28 Tarzwell Drive, Narragansett, Rhode Island, 02882, or by calling (401) 782-3200.

#### *Prohibition on Filleting of Sharks at Sea*

To verify species identification for reporting purposes, the regulation proposes to prohibit filleting of sharks at sea. Sharks would have to be landed and brought to the point of first landing with the flesh attached and spinal column present.

#### *Identification*

The greatest impediment to management, monitoring and stock assessment is the need to

collect accurate information on species composition of the catch; at present 80% of commercial shark catches are classified as "unidentified." Species identification of all sharks landed is required.

Since determination of quotas and overfishing are based on estimates of the total biomass of sharks in all US waters, it was recommended that coastal states, Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands adopt regulations consistent with the federal regulations; specifically, that states apply bag limits to recreational fishermen regardless of where sharks are caught; adopt the specified Federal quotas; prohibit finning and adopt other measures that govern how and when fins may be landed; prohibit the sale of recreationally-caught sharks and shark products; and cooperate with NMFS to ensure consistent and integrated permitting and data collection systems.

The proposed rule in its entirety should appear soon on the web versions of the Federal Register. Look for it at: [http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/aces/aces140.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces/aces140.html).

NMFS has extended the period for public comment on the proposed rule for limited access to the Atlantic shark fishery. The comment period will end on April 28, 1997. Comments should be addressed to William T. Hogarth, Highly Migratory Species Management Division, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910

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We are sad to announce that Dr. Don Nelson passed away in his home on Friday morning March 7<sup>th</sup> after his battle with melanoma skin cancer. Don was a friend and colleague and will be greatly missed, so please take a moment time to write his wife, Ginger, and let her know how much Don meant to everyone involved in shark research.

Ginger would like to establish a grant fund in Don's honor; checks can be sent to her with a note that the money is to be dedicated to the Donald R. Nelson Grant fund on the check. Her address is: Ginger Nelson, 3253 Mortiz Drive, Huntington Beach, CA 92649.

## **EDUCATIONAL and PHOTO/DIVE TRIPS**

### ***Whale Shark Diving Trips***

Whale sharks appear in the Seychelles for prolonged periods, aggregating and feeding over the shallow inshore reefs. To fund SRI's whale shark monitoring program in the Seychelles, Underwater Centre Seychelles has put together three packages for divers with a choice of accommodation at a range of hotels or guest houses.

*#1 - Join the Whale Shark Team*  
*Cost - \$575*

This one-week package includes an orientation into whale shark biology and ecology, introduction to the SRI Whale

Shark Tagging Project and its results, practical tutorials on sexing, tag reading and tagging procedures, 6 boat trips as an observer/recorder/photographer, PADI research specialty certification, membership in "Friends of the Whale Shark" society and an official SRI team T-shirt.

*#2 Whale Shark Photo Safari*  
*Cost - \$725*

This one-week package is offered during peak whale shark seasons and allows small groups of budding photo pros to get the best whale shark photos. Each trip is limited to 6 photographers. The package includes 5 whale shark trips (one per day) for photo-only sessions, 5 boat dives (one per day) for photo-only sessions, membership in "Friends of the Whale Shark" society and an SRI T-shirt

*#3 Whale Shark Watch*

Non-divers have an opportunity to see whale sharks on a snorkel trip. The excursion includes a formal briefing and clearly sets out the rules of no-contact with these animals. Participants must wear snorkeling vests or wetsuits and are accompanied by qualified Divemasters / Instructors from the monitoring project.

You can make your booking directly with Underwater Centre Seychelles, P.O. Box 384, Victoria, Mahe, Seychelles, Telephone & Fax: ++ (248) 344-223 or, eMail: [divesey@seychelles.net](mailto:divesey@seychelles.net). If you prefer, airfares, accommodations and bookings can also be made

for you by Rothschild Dive Safaris (1-800-359-0747), one of SRI's sponsors.

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### ***Shark workshops for divers***

Our World Underwater, Chicago's annual dive symposium, will host a Shark Awareness In Depth Workshop on April 11, 1997, and a second workshop will be held at the John G. Shedd Aquarium on May 3, 1997. Keith Pamper, Senior Aquarist at Shedd Aquarium, along with Gary Chestnut and Greg Kent, will provide divers and other interested individuals with knowledge and insights about diving with sharks. Topics covered include: natural history, feeding and breeding habits, and sensory systems. A certificate of participation will be issued and opportunities to dive with sharks and earn a specialty certification will be discussed, including a travel option to a shark diving destination in the Bahamas. For additional information contact Greg Kent, 826 Cheshire Court, Suite 9, Freeport IL 61032, Tel: (815) 233-0381.

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### ***Naturalist Field Course in The Biology of Sharks***

In conjunction with the American Littoral Society, the Bimini Biological Field Station is offering a non-technical course in the biology of sharks that will run April 17-24<sup>th</sup> at the Bimini Biological Field Station on the island of South Bimini, Bahamas, 52 miles directly east

## **Shark Research Institute Newsletter**

of Miami, Florida. The course features illustrated lectures, field trips, video presentations and encounters with several species of sharks. Tuition for the course is \$800 which is all inclusive. Round trip airfare from Fort Lauderdale to Bimini, all taxes, tips and transfers is \$190. The total tuition and airfare is \$990. The course is limited to 12 students, and there are still 5 places open. A \$250 non-refundable down payment is required on or before April 1<sup>st</sup> to hold your place. All out of state participants should fly directly to Fort Lauderdale International Airport. The Bimini Island Air charter flight (Fairchild Metro twin turboprop 17 pax) leaves from Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport on Thursday April 17<sup>th</sup>. You should plan to be there by noon. Participants will return to Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport on Tuesday April 22<sup>nd</sup> about noon. You should make your Florida flight arrangements to coincide with these times and dates. To sign up, please contact Dr. Samuel H. Gruber: telephone/fax: (305) 274-0628.

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### ***Biology and Ecology of Sharks and Rays***

This week-long course in elasmobranch biology will be held out of the Atlantis Resort on Paradise Island (just north of Nassau) in the Bahamas. Atlantis has a 3-million-gallon saltwater aquarium with more than 100 species of captive fish including eight species of sharks and six species of rays. The topics studied will include reproductive biology, sensory

biology, feeding ecology and life history patterns of sharks indigenous to the tropical western Atlantic. Class activities will include snorkeling in shallow water environments, longline fishing to tag large sharks, and two afternoon two-tank scuba diving trips off New Providence Island. The initial scuba dives will be along an 80-ft wall dive with Caribbean reef sharks, followed by a 45-ft sand-bottom dive with Caribbean reef, blacktip and nurse sharks. The second day's dives will be at an ocean buoy in Tongue of the Ocean with juvenile silky sharks, followed by a shallow dive with Caribbean reef sharks. The course, which runs from July 13<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>, includes 15 hours of lectures and 30 hours of laboratory/field time and is limited to 20 students. The cost is \$1,450 per student, and includes roundtrip airfare from Miami, Florida, room and board (excluding lunches) for seven days, and two two-tank scuba dives (including tanks, weights and belts - other equipment can be rented at additional cost.) To sign up contact Robert Heuter, Mote Marine Laboratory, 1600 Ken Thompson Parkway, Sarasota, FL 34236, Tel: (941) 388-4441, ext. 323.

### **Members' bookshelf ....and magazine rack**

*Great White Sharks, The  
of Carcharodon*

This reference book presents information on anatomy, behavior, ecology, distribution, population dynamics and interactions between humans and white sharks. It establishes a baseline from which additional research on this species might proceed. Copies can be ordered by phone (1-800-321-5068), fax (1-800-874-6418), email: [ap@acad.com](mailto:ap@acad.com), or through their web site: <http://www.apnet.com/>

*Dive International* magazine (UK), January 1997 issue, ran a cover story on SRI's whale shark pilot program in the Seychelles. The article was written by Graeme Gourlay, and contains superb photographs by Lawson Wood and Douglas David Seifert.

Watch for Stan Waterman's article on SRI's whale shark program in the Seychelles. It will be appearing in an upcoming issue of *Ocean Realm Magazine*.

*Sharks & Divers*, a new magazine produced by the folks at *Skin Diver* magazine will hit the newstands in June 1997. The magazine will cover shark diving, "the most exciting activity in diving today." Distribution is expected to be 125,000, and over 12,000 dealers have already placed orders for the magazine. *Sharks & Divers* is designed to stimulate new divers, experienced divers, and non-divers to increase their days of diving activity through participating in shark dives.

**BENEATH THE SEA***Dive Expo*

*Beneath the Sea*, the largest undersea exposition in the United States, will be held March 21-23, 1997 at the Meadowlands Exposition Center, 355 Plaza Drive, Secaucus, New Jersey. Show hours are: Friday March 21, 6 pm to 9 pm; Saturday March 22, 9 am to 5 pm; Sunday March 23, 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. Special guests include Stan Waterman and astronaut/aquanaut Scott Carpenter. Attendance is expected to top 13,000 and there will be more than 50 workshops and seminars, a film festival, parties, and 300 exhibitors, including the Shark Research Institute. Underwater photographer Paul Sutherland, who worked with SRI's whale shark tagging team in Mozambique last October, will present a seminar on whale sharks. If you reside in the tri-state area complimentary passes for the exhibit hall are enclosed with this newsletter. If you are planning to attend on Saturday or Sunday and could spend an hour or two in our booth as a volunteer, please call Marie at (609) 921-3522.

**SHARK PHOTOS  
needed urgently!**

Florida Aquarium will be opening a special exhibit on sharks in June and needs photos of the following species: sand

tiger shark, Port Jackson shark, sandbar shark, lemon shark, gray smoothhound, horn shark, bonnet shark, leopard shark, swell shark, epaulette shark, bamboo shark, smooth dogfish, Florida smoothhound, nurse shark, bluntnose sevengill shark, shovelnose guitarfish, Atlantic guitarfish, clearnose skate, little skate, bluespotted ribbontail ray, bat ray, roughtail stingray, southern stingray, Atlantic stingray, bluntnose stingray, yellow spotted stingray, cownose ray, spotted eagle ray, lesser electric ray, South American rays and Asian rays. The Aquarium plans to use the photos for identification purposes so profile shots are best, but they are also looking for "glamour" shots of other species such as great white, bull, whale shark, etc. If you can help, please contact HQ as soon as possible.

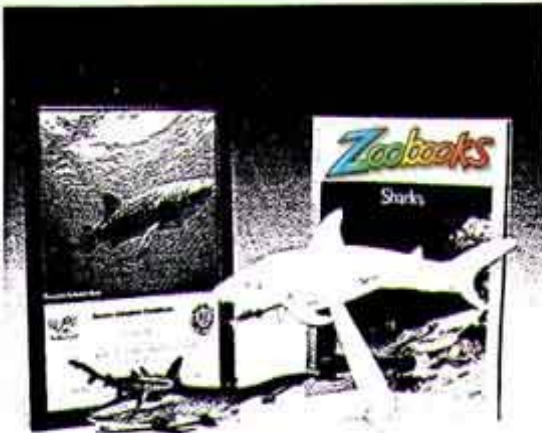
**Whale Shark  
Bibliography  
on the Web**

An annotated bibliography on the whale shark is now available on the World Wide Web at: <http://sclib.ucsd.edu/sci/indexes/whalshrk.html>.

Suggestions for additions should be sent directly to Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciarra  
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Milano, Italy  
Tel: (+39-2) 72001947  
Fax: (+39-2) 72001946, email:  
[gnstri@imiucca.csl.unimi.it](mailto:gnstri@imiucca.csl.unimi.it)

### TOY COMPANY TO OFFER SRI-TAGGED WHALE SHARK

Curious Kids Toy Company, a leader in educational toys, is offering a Discover Sharks Kit for children 6 and up. The kit includes a three-dimensional shark puzzle, shark models, and a whale shark adoption certificate for Babaza, an 8-metre female whale shark tagged by the SRI dive team off Mozambique. Other kits sponsor animals from the Academy of Natural Sciences, Marineland of Florida, Bronx Zoo, and several other zoos in the United States. Look for the kits in toy stores throughout the country in May 1997.



### White shark attraction restricted

NMFS has prohibited the chumming of white sharks in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The ruling went into effect on January 21, 1997.

### ELASMOBRANCHS ASSESSED FOR THE IUCN RED LIST OF THREATENED ANIMALS

The Shark Resolution, adopted at the 9<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1994, directed the Animals Committee to compile and review existing data on the biological and trade status of shark species subject to international trade, and to prepare a discussion paper prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> CITES Conference in June 1997 in Zimbabwe. Data have been compiled by a number of organizations to assist the CITES committee with preparation of its discussion papers, including the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

#### IUCN RED LIST

<u>Name</u>	<u>Category</u>
Ganges shark - <i>Glyphis gangeticus</i>	Critically endangered
Largetooth sawfish - <i>Pristis perotteti</i>	Critically endangered
Freshwater sawfish - <i>Pristis microdon</i>	Endangered
Smalltooth sawfish - <i>Pristis pectinata</i>	Endangered
Common sawfish - <i>Pristis pristis</i>	Endangered
Freshwater sawfish - <i>Pristis microdon</i>	Endangered
Smalltooth sawfish - <i>Pristis pectinata</i>	Endangered
Sand tiger shark - <i>Carcharias taurus</i>	Vulnerable
White shark - <i>Carcharodon carcharias</i>	Vulnerable
Basking shark - <i>Cetorhinus maximus</i>	Vulnerable
Giant freshwater stingray - <i>Himantura chaophraya</i>	Vulnerable
Whale shark - <i>Rhincodon typus</i>	Data deficient
Deepsea skate, <i>Bathyraja abyssicola</i>	Data deficient

The following species are categorized as "Lower risk: near threatened":  
 Porbeagle shark - *Lamna nasus*; Blacktip shark - *Carcharhinus limbatus*;  
 Dusky shark - *Carcharhinus obscurus*; Sandbar shark - *Carcharhinus plumbeus*;  
 Bluntnose sixgill shark - *Hexanchus griseus*; and Kitefin shark, *Dalatias licha*

The most recent version of the list is available on the World Wide Web at:  
[http://www.wcmc.org.uk/data/database/rl\\_anml\\_combo.html](http://www.wcmc.org.uk/data/database/rl_anml_combo.html)

#### TRIVIA

Sawfishes, often perceived as "sharks with swords", are often associated with warfare. Tooth-studded rostra of these fish have been used as weapons in the Philippines, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand. Paintings of sawfish have are unique elasmobranch fishes that have toothed rostra.