

# Shark Research Institute Newsletter



**Shark Research Institute Global Headquarters  
P.O. Box 40, Princeton, New Jersey 08540, USA**

## Update India



*2001 - A trader in Veraval with dried whale shark fin*

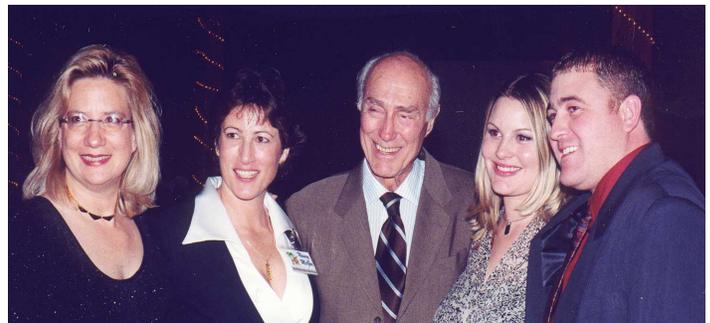
The impact of the ban on whale shark hunting in Gujarat was assessed last month by Alka and Arun Patil. The team traveled throughout the province, interviewing government officials, fishermen and exporters. The Indian government required all exporters to turn in stocks of whale shark products last year, and the Indian Navy is enforcing the ban.

Because whale shark products represented only a small percentage of their total revenue, there has been no opposition to the prohibition on hunting by exporters, and the migrant laborers that butchered the sharks have found work elsewhere. Local fishermen, however, have lodged protests with the government, claiming that the ban creates economic hardship. After legislating protection for whale sharks, the Indian government extended protection to all shark species, but due to pressure from fisherman, reduced the protection to only nine other species of sharks. For the ban to remain in effect it is important that whale shark ecotourism be established in the area. With this in mind, the team also researched travel time and costs of transportation, hotels and boats suitable for shark ecotourism in Veraval and the island of Diu. In addition to whale sharks, this section of India has many attractions: ancient Hindu temples and archaeological sites, lions and beautiful beaches. The 2002 whale shark season will end in May, but Arun and Alka will lead an expedition there early next season. Any members game to explore the virgin waters of the Arabian Sea, contact SRI-HQ.

## Dallas Fundraiser a Success!

A capacity crowd of 200 divers attended the Stan Waterman World Film Premiere on Saturday 26 January at the Dallas World Aquarium. The evening began with a reception, silent auction and Mr. Waterman autographing videos and SRI posters at the aquarium's main level, while sharks, leafy sea dragons, giant octopus, eels, rays and a host of other marine creatures observed the function. Upstairs, guests were treated to a Lucullan feast and keepsakes.

Island Time president Nancy McGee made the welcoming statement and screened two short, extremely humorous films "roasting" Mr. Waterman. He was thoroughly pleased and amused by the fun play upon him. With a brief explanation, Mr. Waterman introduced "The Red Sea", which had its debut, followed by "Bali & the Dragons".



*Left to right: Susan Scarlett, Nancy McGee, Stan Waterman, Jessica Pierce, Tim Smith*

Many of the attendees requested the film presentation by Mr. Waterman become an annual event in Dallas. SRI would like to thank Mr. Waterman, Nancy McGee and her staff, event sponsors, the corporations and individuals that contributed items to the silent auction, and the divers that attended the event.

## Global Shark Attack File

**USA:** At 13h00 on 1 January 2002, Thomas Holmes (36) was snorkeling at Olowalu, Maui, Hawaii, when a 3-metre tiger shark lacerated his buttocks and thigh. On 16 March, Robert Land (39) was snorkeling at Deerfield Beach, Florida, when a 3-foot nurse shark grabbed his arm.

**SOUTH AFRICA:** On 1 January, surfskier Michael van Nierkerk stopped to watch the setting sun off Mtunzini; as he dangled his leg in the water, a shark, species unknown, bit his foot. At 02h00 on 4 January, Adrian Sheik was fishing in Durban harbor when a shark, thought to be a Zambesi, mauled his leg. Later the same day the boy's leg was surgically amputated.

**AUSTRALIA:** On 30 January, there were two incidents in Australian waters. A male swimmer (32) was bitten on the thigh by a shark, species unknown, at the Collie River. At 20h45 (sunset), surfer Andrew Crib (20) was off One Mile Beach near Fingal Spit when he encountered a 3-metre tiger shark; the surfer suffered bruises and lacerations. On the evening of 7 February, a shark bit the stern of a kayak; the kayaker's chest was bruised and a tooth fragment was recovered from the stern of his kayak. At 10h00 on 16 February, a surfer (30) at Sunshine Beach, Queensland, was bitten on the foot by a 1.5-metre whaler.

**TURKS & CAICOS:** On 23 February, a fishing boat with four men onboard capsized; two men were rescued, one man was thought to have been killed by a shark, and another man was missing.

## SRI In the News

*Dive Training* magazine, March 2002, p. 24, notes SRI's call for volunteers in LaPaz. *Sport Diver* magazine, March 2002, p. 12, 'Trek of the Whale Sharks' describes SRI's work in the Galapagos Islands. Read *Skin Diver* magazine, April 2002 edition, for Jonathan Bird's account about SRI in the Galapagos and the challenge of implanting satellite tags in whale sharks. *Scuba Diving* magazine, April 2002 edition, contains an essay on the Florida Shark Feeding Ban by Dr. Erich Ritter. It is the most informative, thoughtful and well-balanced piece written to date on the subject. We are grateful to all the above magazines for spreading the word about SRI's programs and encouraging sport diver participation in our research. *PADI*

*Undersea Journal*, First Quarter 2002, features a superb article titled "The Economic Truth About the Environment" by Todd Menzel, that discusses SRI's whale shark rescue project in India.

## SRI - Mexico



Jackie Guccione

The SRI Field Station will be up and running this spring. Jackie Guccione, center manager, is on site and working round the clock to get it ship-shape for the spring expedition teams. If any members have a computer, scanner, printer, microscope and/or useable vehicle that they are able to donate to the

SRI Field Station in LaPaz, please contact [antoniou@sharks.org](mailto:antoniou@sharks.org)

## SRI - Canada

SRI-Canada, collaborating with Aqualog Society and La Musee du Fjord in La Baie, Quebec, participated in an expedition to study the Greenland shark (*Somniosus microcephalus*) in the Saguenay Estuary from 9 through 13 February 2002. Twenty-four lines baited with halibut pieces were set through the ice to a depth of 300 feet for two weeks prior to the start of the expedition. During the expedition, two lines were baited with halibut pieces and set at a depth of 1,000 feet, each line supplemented with a bucket of bovine heart, liver, and blood from a local abatoir. Despite these diligent efforts, no Greenland sharks were caught by our team. Through logistical support graciously provided by La Musee du Fjord, we did, however, obtain capture data (including date, location, length, weight, and depth) for 36 Greenland sharks, culled from provincial archives and personal interviews with local ice anglers. In addition, stomach contents from two Greenland shark specimens and various other tissue samples were obtained and are presently being prepared for shipment to SRI-Canada headquarters in Vancouver, where they will be examined. Distribution records of Greenland sharks in the Saguenay Estuary, along with results from examination of stomach contents and other tissues, will be prepared for submission to an

appropriate peer-reviewed journal. This expedition generated much local and national media coverage which greatly increased public awareness of the Greenland shark in the Saguenay Estuary. Foundation was also laid for enhanced capture documentation and data collection by local ice anglers, an effort that will be coordinated through the auspices of La Musee du Fjord.

SRI-Canada wishes to acknowledge the superb on-site logistical organization provided by Aqualog Society as well as the warm hospitality and local community liaison assistance graciously provided by La Musee du Fjord.

*Rick Martin, Director, SRI-Canada*

## Tagging Sharks off Southern India

Nurse sharks in the Lackshadweep Islands off the southern coast of India are wearing SRI tags. They are being tagged by divers from Reef Watch Marine Conservation (headquartered in Mumbai) as part of a joint project with SRI. "Tagging allows us to determine the movements of these sharks throughout the islands of this remote archipelago," says biologist Sarang Kulkarni, director of the study.

## CONSERVATION NEWS

### *Costa Rica*

On 12 January 2002, when the Costa Rican National Coast Guard arrested the 22-metre *Puri*, a Colombian vessel, for illegal fishing in their Exclusive Economic Zone, the vessel had marlin and sharks in its hold.

"Illegal fishing is out of control in our EEZ and strategically important Marine Protected Areas (MPA's) like Cocos Island, declared a World Heritage Site by the United Nations in 1997, are being fished out", says Randall Arauz of the Sea Turtle Restoration Project. "Longlining activities in these MPAs target pelagic species, with a clear preference for sharks due to their highly prized fins.

On 31 January, the Trial Board of Puntarenas imposed a \$300,000 fine against the owners of the Ecuadorian pirate vessel *San Jose I*, arrested 22 August 2001 for illegally fishing within the Cocos Island National Park. The vessel will be confiscated for use of the Ministry of Public Security to further enforce protection of this international treasure. The Trial Board also sentenced the captain of the vessel to a 3-year jail term.

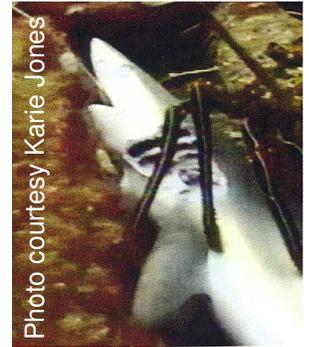


Photo courtesy Karie Jones

According to Commander Claudio Pacheco, Director of the National Coast Guard Service, "this is an extraordinary precedent that confirms our commitment towards the protection of our country's marine resources." "It sends a strong and important message to the world's fishing fleets that protection of marine parks deserves and will receive the same level of protection as land-based parks," said Todd Steiner, Executive Director of Sea Turtle Restoration Project. "It is imperative that the Costa Rican justice system rule as firmly against two other Colombian pirate vessels, *Puri* and *Luz Marlene* (arrested on 25 January 2002)", said Arauz. "We commend the Costa Rican Courts for taking this important action, and we also expect the authorities to act accordingly against all international and domestic pirate fishermen, as these illegal activities are out of control in all of the Marine Protected Areas of Costa Rica."

## SRI Receives Continued Support

SRI thanks the following sponsors for their continued support:

- **Goddard School**
- **JBL Enterprises Inc.**
- **PADI Foundation**
- **Pelican Products**
- **Project AWARE Foundation**
- **Microwave Telemetry, Inc.**
- **C2 Educational Expeditions**
- **Galapagos Adventures**

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## Credit Cards

SRI is now accepting credit cards, MasterCard and Visa, for donations, memberships, lifetime whale shark adoptions, and expedition registrations.



## Australia Protects Whale Sharks

Federal Environment Minister Robert Hill announced that the whale shark is now protected under the EPBC Act in Commonwealth and State waters. "The whale shark is a magnificent, gentle creature and it is globally rare," said Hill. Australia also supports listing of the whale shark under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which will help promote international efforts to protect the species.

*Brad Norman*

## USA Bans Shark Finning

The federal ban on shark finning was extended to the Pacific Ocean by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Department of Commerce. The new regulations, effective March 13, 2002, implement the Shark Finning Prohibition Act of 2000. The regulations make it unlawful for any federally regulated fishing vessel to carry or land shark fins without the entire shark carcass.

## La Paz, Utila, Galapagos & Sandtiger Shark Expedition Dates on the Web

Dates of expeditions to study whale sharks, mantas, sandtiger and hammerhead sharks are posted on SRI's website at [www.sharks.org](http://www.sharks.org) or contact SRI and we will mail a brochure to you.

## Whale Shark Sculpture for OWS



Sculptor Michael Bellefeuille, a Metis Indian with French Canadian ancestry, uses his talent to promote conservation and Native American charities. He is shown (above left) presenting SRI President Stan Waterman with a whale shark that he carved from Manitoba slate. Michael donated the sculpture to raise funds for Operation Whale Shark. The sculpture will be auctioned at an SRI fundraiser later this year.