

# Shark Research Institute

## Newsletter



**Shark Research Institute Global Headquarters**  
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### Basking Shark Gains International Protection



Nairobi, November 24, 2005: The basking shark, was listed on Appendix I and II of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), also known

as the Bonn Convention. CMS is a treaty under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).

The listings strengthen protection for the species in international waters. The proposal to protect the shark was submitted by the United Kingdom (UK) delegation at the CMS Conference of Parties held in Nairobi. Whale sharks have been protected in UK waters since 1998 under their Wildlife & Countryside Act, but beyond the 200 nautical mile boundary of UK jurisdiction, basking sharks were vulnerable to exploitation. The CMS listings mean that countries which are signatories to CMS and have populations of basking sharks must take concerted action to protect the species.

### Faux Shark Fin Soup

**Thailand:** Marisa Jatupornpipat, an associate professor of science at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology in Lat Krabang, has developed faux shark fin to be used in sharkfin soup, in hopes of lessening the fishing pressure on sharks. Made of green seaweed and gelatin, Bio Shark Fin is reported have the same taste and texture as sharkfin — unlike other such products on the market. The cost will be far less than authentic shark fin and it is hoped the product will be on the market by spring. The possible downside, according to some conservationists, is that young customers who like the faux shark fin soup may someday want to try the real thing.

### GSAF available Online

We've long believed that statistics about shark attacks are misleading. While a few human/shark encounters result in serious injury or death, the majority do not. To lump together all so-called "shark attacks"—from a cut on a finger (or no injury such as when a surfboard is bitten) to those in which a limb is lost—does a disservice to the general public and to sharks. It perpetuates the negative image of sharks and clouds the facts with hype.

The Global Shark Attack File (GSAF) was created by a group of physicians and surgeons in the mid-1980s to gather medical data relating to such events, and SRI has maintained the GSAF since 1993. On January 15, the new GSAF website will go live at [www.sharkattackfile.net](http://www.sharkattackfile.net). The incident log will be available online as an Excel file that can be downloaded. To encourage transparency of data, each entry is referenced so that visitors can verify the event and source of data. The site also provides a bibliography, contact information of case investigators, incident reporting forms, and recommendations on how to minimize the risk of a negative encounter with a shark. It also includes a page with photos and brief descriptions of species of sharks that have been implicated in these incidents. Dalhousie University is conducting a large scale-analysis of the environmental data that will be available on the GSAF site in the spring of 2006. In the meantime, the Excel format allows media and visitors to retrieve and verify general information on their own.

Serious researchers are invited to join the GSAF and gain access to its library of journal articles and discussion board. Although not yet available online, the GSAF database links each entry to a digitalized case file containing maps of the area, weather, sea and environmental conditions, photographs, medical drawings and other relevant information.



We are sad to report that Cliff Simoneau, SRI's Director of Technical Operations lost his battle with cancer last month. Cliff was also the owner of Silent Diving, trained SRI researchers in the use of rebreathers, and ran our New Hampshire office. Cliff was a good friend and all who knew and worked with him.



Our very deepest condolences to the family of Captain Michele Marks, Michelle, 37, was a member of SRI and pilot of the Chalk's Ocean Airways plane which crashed into the sea at Miami on December 19th. The plane's wing fell off on a flight to the Bahamas and all on board perished.

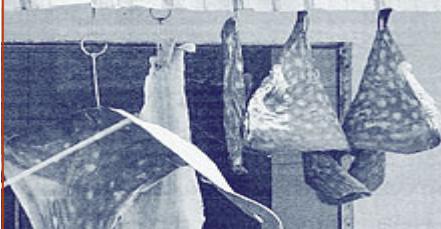
## Sabah calls for ban on Shark Fin Soup

**Kota Kinabalu:** Charles Miao opened his restaurant last February and he does not serve shark's fin soup.

One reason for doing so is he believes the number of sharks in Sabah waters is depleting very fast due to the demand for the Chinese delicacy.

Another reason is the way the sharks are hunted for their fins. "It is simply cruel. The fins are chopped off living sharks and the animals are thrown back into the sea." Miao, who also runs a dive and tour business, said "whatever it is, it's just not right to sell the delicacy".

The Sabah Anglers' Association recently called for a ban on shark fin soup at all eateries. Its president, Datuk Wilfred Lingham, had said divers would often come across dead sharks, with their



Fins of whale sharks being dried at the back of a restaurant in Sabah

fins cut off, on the seabed and anglers too would sometimes hook on such carcasses.

"It's supposed to promote better health and virility apart from being a status symbol for those who serve them," said Sabah Chinese Cultural Association president Datuk Chau Tet On. "All these are old beliefs which should no longer be encouraged. These claims about the fins being good for the health, I don't think there is any scientific truth to that."

Assistant Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Datuk Karim Bujang said though it was not official policy, the government does not serve shark's fin soup at official functions. "We have taken steps to discourage local fishermen from killing sharks for their fins and have take action against those who catch protected shark species, particularly whale sharks."

## Field Notes . . .

**SRI's Field Station in LaPaz, Mexico:** Our ongoing aerial survey indicates some 28 whale sharks are now feeding in the Bay of LaPaz!

**Congratulations:** To Dr. Erich Ritter and Marie Levine. Their paper, *Bite motivation of sharks reflected by the wound structure on humans*, has been published in the American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology.

**US Federal Court:** Lane Labs and founder Andrew Lane, who wrongly claimed its shark cartilage and other products had cancer-fighting benefits, has agreed to refund customers up to \$8 million.

## Shark Photography Course

Course Director: Don Tipton

Location: Bahamas

Cost: \$2,100 per diver, per session, includes accommodations, diving, course materials & most meals.

Objective: Learn how to photograph sharks.

**Session 1 - July 1-8, 2006.** The focus is on basics and is geared for those who have just purchased underwater photographic or video equipment.

**Session 2 - July 8-15, 2006.** This session is designed for the experienced underwater photographer who is ready to turn pro.

*For more information, contact Marie at (609) 921-3522 or marie@sharks.org*

## Shark meat - 'haraam' or 'halal'

*Islamabad, Pakistan - December 10, 2005:* The hardline MMA provincial government in NWFP has banned the sale of "baby shark" because it falls in the category of food that is forbidden under Islamic dietary rules.

NWFP Food Minister Fazl-e-Rabbani Haqqani, banned the sale of *Magra Liyara* or "baby shark" in the market. "Any animal that has teeth and eats the flesh of other animals is forbidden in Islam," said Haqqani. We confess that we don't know whether "baby shark" refers to a fetal shark or if it is a local name for a species of bony fish, but certainly sharks have teeth and consume the flesh of other animals.

Haggani also ordered the arrest of three vendors for selling the fish; however, the shopkeepers were later released after paying fines of 1,000 rupees. Haqqani said that he had been receiving complaints regarding the sale of shark for a long time, and fish vendors were selling the fish with head and tail chopped off. Fishmongers, on the other hand, say they are still selling the fish and have even obtained a fatwa (religious edict) from prominent religious scholar Maulana Hasan Jan that the fish is halal (allowed). One shop owner, whose brother was arrested in an earlier raid, said that the fish was in considerable demand and was being supplied even to the Governor's House. Meanwhile, Food Director Sahibzada Fazle Amin said the department had not yet issued orders to ban the said fish. "Our job is to check prices and quality. It's a religious issue and, frankly speaking, we don't know anything about it."

## Thank you to our Supporters

We are very grateful for the continuing support and encouragement of:

- San Diego Shark Diving
- Freeman Foundation
- IGTOA
- JBL Enterprises Inc.
- Microwave Telemetry, Inc.
- The Kathy & Tom Miller Family Foundation
- Project AWARE Foundation
- The Philanthropic Group
- The Rohauer Collection Foundation
- Underwater Video Images
- Westcliff Foundation

## GLOBAL SHARK ATTACK FILE

*SRI maintains the Global Shark Attack File (GSAF) as a resource for researchers, physicians and the media who require accurate information about these incidents.*

**ATLANTIC OCEAN:** On December 20, the seven-metre boat of Tara Remington and Iain Rudkin was rammed by a shark for 15 minutes during an international rowing competition. The pair were 600 nautical miles west of the Canary Islands. The boat sustained no damage and the occupants were not injured.

**AUSTRALIA:** On December 11, Glenn Simpson, 44, was spearfishing at St. Crispin Reef in Queensland when his right arm was bitten by a shark. In early December the outboard motor of a 5.4-metre fibreglass boat owned by Robert Hogg was bitten by a white shark north of Adelaide, South Australia, and the previous month the outboard motor of a 4.5-metre boat owned by Rodney Lawn was mounched by a shark south of Melbourne, Victoria.

**SOUTH AFRICA:** On November 25, at Nahoon, East London, surfer Ashley Milford, 26, sustained a cut on his finger when his board was bitten by a shark.

**USA:** On November 27, Blake Perry, 23, was surfing at Ponce Inlet, Florida, when his right thumb and palm were lacerated by a shark. On December 21, Jonathan Genant, 29, was swimming at Keawakapu Beach, Maui, Hawaii, when his left hand was bitten by a tiger shark.

## Good News from the Galapagos

International Galapagos Tour Operators Association (IGTOA) reports that the Minister of Environment, Dr. Anna Albán, in concert with the Galapagos management authority (AIM) has now prohibited long line fishing in the Galapagos Marine Reserve. Letters of congratulations on the decision have been sent to Dr. Albán and to AIM.

## Amos Nachoum wins Lucie!

SRI Member and world-renowned Nikon School photographer Amos Nachoum won 1<sup>st</sup> place in the underwater division of the Lucie Awards, one of the most prestigious awards honoring the greatest achievements in photography. For more information, see: <http://photoawards.com/>

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WE'RE ON THE WEB  
[WWW.SHARKS.ORG](http://WWW.SHARKS.ORG)

## Shows & Seminars

SRI will be at the following Adventure Expo shows. If you haven't been to an Adventure Expo, you are missing a lot fun: National Geographic seminars, scuba diving in a heated pool, rock wall climbing, incredible door prizes and hundreds of exhibits. Please stop by the SRI booth and "talk shark".



### CHICAGO, IL

Daniel E. Stephens Convention Center  
555 N. River Road  
Rosemont, IL 60018  
Saturday, January 7, 2006: 10 am – 5 pm  
Sunday, January 8, 2006: 11 am – 4 pm

### NEW YORK, NY

Jacob K. Javits Convention Center  
655 West 34th Street  
New York, NY 10001  
Saturday, January 14, 2006: 10 am – 6 pm  
Sunday, January 15, 2006: 11 am – 5 pm

### WASHINGTON, DC

Washington Convention Center  
801 Mount Vernon Place, NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
Saturday, February 11, 2006: 10 am – 6 pm  
Sunday, February 12, 2006: 11 am – 4 pm

And mark your calendars for **Beneath The Sea**, the largest dive show on the East Coast: March 24, 25 & 26, 2006. See [www.beneaththesea.org](http://www.beneaththesea.org)

## Kudos to Hong Kong University!

The Chinese in Hong Kong have been die-hard shark's fin lovers, but now Hong Kong University is leading a campaign against eating shark fin, for ecological reasons. The move, which makes the university the first large organization to ban the dish after Disneyland acceded to public pressure in April, prevents caterers under contract with the university from serving any dish that contains shark fin.

"The university hopes not only to encourage all students, staff and alumni to eschew shark fin dishes at all times but also to give a lead which others in Hong Kong will follow," said the statement signed by university vice chancellor Tsui Lap-chee.

In Hong Kong's posh restaurants, shark fin soup is a delicacy. It is *de rigueur* in expensive banquets, wedding parties, and at dinner tables of the well-heeled. Lucrative, multi-million-dollar business deals are often struck in the backrooms of top-notch shark's fin restaurants.

The demand for shark's fin has led to the near-extinction of sharks. Residents in Hong Kong consume 1,400 tons of shark fin per year. As a result, many species of sharks have become endangered. The scarcity of endangered species makes them more expensive, which in turn accelerates the path to extinction.

The university not only bans shark fin from campus restaurants and functions, it doesn't reimburse its employees for dinner with shark's fin on the menu.

Hong Kong University deserves highest praise for its leadership and initiative.