

# Shark Research Institute

## Member Newsletter



**Shark Research Institute Global Headquarters**

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### *SRI Director receives the Gibbs Award*

The Shark Research Institute (SRI) is pleased to announce that our director, Dr. Leonard J.V. Compagno, has received the prestigious Robert H. Gibbs, Jr. Memorial Award for excellence in Systematic Ichthyology -- the study of the diversity of fishes.

The Robert H. Gibbs, Jr. Memorial Award honors the memory of Robert H. Gibbs, Jr., Distinguished Fellow of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists. The award, made possible by an endowment established by the Society from a gift provided by Frigga Gibbs, consists of a plaque commemorating the award and a cash sum. The award is offered annually. The announcement of Dr. Compagno as the 2009 recipient was announced at the annual meeting of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists recently held in Portland, Oregon.

Dr. Compagno has published more than 600 items including abstracts, papers, popular articles, reports, books and book chapters. His major books include *Sharks of the Order Carcharhiniformes*; the 3-volume *FAO Catalog of World Sharks*; the revised *FAO Catalog of World Sharks, Guide to the Sharks and Rays of Southern Africa*, and *Sharks of the World*, the first-ever field guide to sharks.

A pioneer in shark conservation since the early 1990s, Dr. Compagno was a leader in securing protective legislation for white sharks in South African waters. He has worked with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Shark Specialist Group, since its inception, serves as their regional chair (southern Africa), and participated in the Red-Listing and CITES listing of various cartilaginous fishes. As Director of SRI, Dr. Compagno provided scientific support to the successful listing of whale sharks and basking sharks on CITES Appendix II in 2002, and the listing of white sharks in 2004.

"Receiving the Gibbs Award is a highlight of my career, as it is for every systematic ichthyologist privileged to receive it," says Dr. Compagno. "We

wish Leonard the best in his continued research at SRI," says Chairman of the SRI Board of Trustee, Captain Stephen Nagiewicz. "Most recipients of the award have been near or at the end of their careers, so it is particularly gratifying that Dr. Compagno has received this award while he is still working in his specialty. the biodiversity of sharks."



*Leonard Compagno, Ph.D.*

### *Palau : World's First Shark Sanctuary*



*President Toribiong*

On September 25, 2009, at the United Nations General Assembly, the President of Palau, Johnson Toribiong, announced that Palau is creating the world's first "shark sanctuary", banning all commercial shark fishing in its waters. The sanctuary will protect sharks in Palau's entire Exclusive Economic Zone,

230,000 sq miles (600,000 sq km) of the Pacific ocean.

President Toribiong also called for a global ban on shark-finning. "The need to protect the sharks outweighs the need to enjoy a bowl of soup," he said. "These creatures are being slaughtered and are perhaps at the brink of extinction unless we take positive action to protect them."

Asked what he would be urging other leaders to do, he said simply: "To follow suit."

*continued on next page*

### Continued ...Palau Shark Sanctuary

The Republic Palau is a small country but it chose a wise, courageous, and caring giant as its president. SRI congratulates President Toribiong for his leadership.

We are also deeply grateful to Edward Dorson and Dermot Keane, both have worked tirelessly to protect the sharks of Palau. Sharks are indeed fortunate to have such eloquent advocates!

### Shark Fin Dealer Prosecuted

Mark L. Harrison, a shark fin dealer who has bought and sold millions of fins in the past 20 years, was caught and prosecuted when he attempted to ship fins from three species of protected sharks through Atlanta's international airport. In 2007, he tried to ship 211 fins from Caribbean sharp-nosed sharks, two fins from bignose sharks, and two fins from night sharks, all of which are protected by Florida and/or federal laws due to their low population levels.

Harrison also pleaded guilty to violating the Lacey Act, a federal fish and wildlife trafficking law. In February 2005, he purchased shark fins in Florida from a fisherman and resold them in interstate commerce. No report of the landing or sale of those fins was filed with Florida or Federal authorities. He also pleaded guilty to a third charge related to trading in shark fins that had been prepared, packed or held under unsanitary conditions.

Harrison was prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Georgia and the Justice Department's Environmental Crimes Section. He was sentenced to five years probation and fined \$5,000 for violating federal wildlife protection laws. "Hopefully, this sentence will raise public awareness of how unlawful commercialization impacts certain species of wildlife," said James Gale, special agent in charge for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's office of law enforcement. As part of his sentence, Harrison was ordered to take out an advertisement in a publication with a large circulation in the fish industry about complying with shark fin reporting requirements.

SRI congratulates the Special Agents of the NOAA Office for Law Enforcement, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement and the Food and Drug Administration Office of Criminal Investigations who investigated this case.

### Expeditions

Spaces are available on the following expeditions. Please note: These are *not* dive vacations; they are research expeditions. Participants will be expected to assist SRI scientists to gather and record data. As result, some costs are partially deductible from your US Federal income taxes. *Spaces fill quickly.* To reserve a space or obtain more details, go to:

[www.sharks.org/expeditions](http://www.sharks.org/expeditions)

#### Whale Sharks

**Utila, Honduras:** Any week. \$1,760 per diver.

**Philippine Islands:** April 2010. \$3,000 per diver.

#### White Sharks

**False Bay, South Africa:** \$3,900 per person in prime white shark season (July). Cage diving optional. These are the sharks of 'Air Jaws' fame, known for spectacular aerial displays. If you prefer a shorter stay or have particular dates in mind, contact HQ.

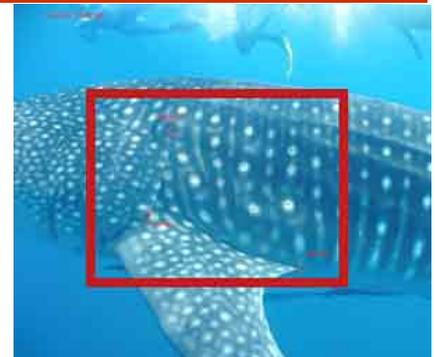
#### Striped Marlins

This is not an SRI expedition but it is a unique opportunity to observe these magnificent ocean predators. November 20-28, 2009. \$8,800 per diver.

For space on these and other expeditions to **Isla Guadalupe, LaPaz, Indonesia, Philippines & Palau**, contact HQ at 609.921.3522.

### WANTED

The spots on a whale shark are as unique as your fingerprints. With a photo of the spot pattern behind the gill slits on the whale shark as shown by the red box in this photo,



an individual whale shark can be identified. Photos of either side, or preferably both sides of the whale shark, are valuable in assisting our research. If you'd like to help, please submit your photos so that we can expand our database and identify the sharks.

Send your photos to [marie@sharks.org](mailto:marie@sharks.org) & [david@mcass.sc](mailto:david@mcass.sc), and please tell us where and when the photo was taken.

## Thank You to Our Supporters!

We are very grateful for the continued support of:

- **The Adikes Family Foundation**
- **Adventure Aquarium**
- **Amos Nachoum**
- **Wendy Benchley**
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- **Greg Sparks**
- **Underwater Adventures Aquarium**
- **Underwater Video Images**
- **Al Vinjamur**
- **The Wave Foundation**
- **World Wildlife Fund**

## Special Thanks . . .

- To award-winning underwater photographer Amos Nachoum. Amos has been auctioning museum-quality prints of his spectacular shark photos to raise funds for SRI's conservation programs.
- To SRI members Joe Lein, Deb Albert, and Bob Sandburg who have been personally visiting Asian restaurants, asking them to take shark fin soup off their menus. Any members who are able to assist, please contact : [Laura4sharks@gmail.com](mailto:Laura4sharks@gmail.com)

## Meet SRI's Newest Board Member

SRI welcomes Stephen Weinstock to our Board of Trustees! A long-time supporter of SRI, Steve is a commercial real-estate developer and President of Weinstock Properties, LLC. He has also served on the boards of a number of non-profit corporations in Virginia and Washington, D.C, and brings many years of experience in fundraising to SRI.

## White Sharks Making a Come-Back



*Scientists tagging a white shark in MA waters. Photo by Greg Skomal*

White sharks appear to be making a come-back along the Massachusetts coast. Five white sharks were recently tagged off Chatham, and satellite tags were placed on two of them. The tags are programmed to pop off on January 15, 2010, and will transmit data allowing researchers discern the sharks migratory patterns and behavior, as well as monitoring

sea temperatures and depths in which the sharks travel. The tags were deployed on the sharks by Greg Skomal, state biologist, and Captain Bill Chaprales. The growing number of sightings of white sharks in the area is attributed to an expanding seal population off Cape Cod and Monomoy Island.

## Status of the Shark Conservation Act

Please, urge your Senators to support the Shark Conservation Act of 2009, S-850. This bill, introduced in the Senate by John Kerry (D-MA), bans removal of shark fins at sea, and will close some of the other loopholes in the current U.S. shark finning law. To locate the contact information of your senator, go to:

[http://www.senate.gov/general/contact\\_information/senators\\_cfm.cfm](http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm)

## No more shark fins on Alibaba.com!

Alibaba.com, the world's largest business-to-business portal, has agreed to ban all online trade in shark fins, elephant ivory, and sea turtle products. The company says they are also strengthening their control of wildlife products to conform with CITES regulations.

## Maldives takes another initiative

The Maldives has marked three sea-protected areas to safeguard whale sharks around their islands. Only limited fishing is allowed in the protected areas and there are strict guidelines for diving and snorkeling. Speed limits are also imposed on boats to prevent lacerations to the sharks, and waste management programs have been initiated to lessen pollution.

"The marine environment is the bedrock of our economy, supporting our largest industries: tourism and fisheries," said Environment Minister Mohamed Aslam. "Not only will this initiative protect whale sharks, but also other mega fauna including manta rays and reef sharks."

## Mark your Calendars

### ● October 10-11, 2009

Adventures in Travel Expo at the Jacob Javits Convention Center, 655 West 34th Street, New York City. Look for SRI at booth #455! Show Hours are:

Saturday, October 10th 10:00 am to 5:00 pm;

Sunday, October 11th: 11:00 am to 4:00 pm

To receive your **FREE** admission, ticket, go to [www.adventureexpo.com/consumer](http://www.adventureexpo.com/consumer) and enter **PROMO CODE: SRI**



### ● October 10-18, 2009

European Shark Week. Many activities throughout Europe to raise awareness of the need for shark conservation. [www.europeansharkweek.org](http://www.europeansharkweek.org)

### ● March 13-25, 2010.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) CoP15 at Doha, Qatar.

### ● March 26-28, 2010.

Beneath the Sea (the largest consumer dive show in the USA) at Meadowlands Convention Center. Tickets may be purchased online at [beneaththesea.org](http://beneaththesea.org)



## Shark Art Exhibit



*Kawariki and the Sharkman*  
by Jojo Ensslin

To raise awareness about the need for shark conservation, art gallery owner Kolja Steinroetter recently presented an exhibit featuring paintings of sharks by 26 artists.

SRI Board member Jupp Kerckerinck also gave a presentation on sharks at the show's opening in Munster, Germany, last month.

## Shark Celebrity Auction

Our Shark Celebrity Auction, held during Discovery Channel's Shark Week 2009, was such a huge success that we are making it an annual event! Winners have already met (or have scheduled lunch or dinner) to "talk shark" one-on-one with experts and celebrities from around the world. As expected, bidding was especially heavy on Dr. Sylvia Earle, the sea's most eloquent champion, and Chris Fallows who offered his winning bidder the opportunity to go to sea with him and observe the aerial displays of white sharks in False Bay, South Africa. Others on the auction block were filmmakers, Tom Campbell, Howard Hall, Jeff Kurr and Marty Snyderman, photographers Jonathan Bird, Amos Nachoum and Don Tipton; researchers Dr. Alex Antoniou, Dean Fessler, Jeff Gallant, Neil Hammerschlag, Jason Holmberg, Mark Marks, Matt Potenski, Dr. Erich Ritter and Dr. Jennifer Schmidt; conservationists, Jupp Kerckerinck and Marie Levine; shark attack specialists Ralph Collier and Dr. Richard Fernicola; artist/authors Richard Ellis and Dr. Alessandro de Maddalena, and cartoonist Jim Toomey, creator of *Sherman's Lagoon*; shark tour operators Paul Anes, Steve Fox and Patric Douglas; and Shark Diver magazine publisher, Eli Martinez. All the experts and celebrities were snapped up fast. SRI thanks each and every celebrity and shark expert for making the auction a success! And a very special thanks to Carolyn Nickels who thought of and organized the event.