

# Shark Research Institute Newsletter



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## Galapagos Study Continues!

*Our deepest gratitude* to everyone who contributed funds to continue and expand SRI's research in the Galapagos Islands: Rohauer Collection Foundation, Greg Aslinger, Owen Babcock, Diana Baca, Donald Bailey, Elizabeth Bernich, Jack Brickley & Melissa Meistrell, Paige Colwell, Lynn Davies, Marla Downer, Debbie Field, James Field, Carol Field, Katherine Gadsden, Dina Giordano, Trina Jacobson, Richard Kreisler & Mary Clark, Phyllis Major, Jim Permenter, Sidney Rosen, Sandra Schroth, Patricia Wilson and Ed Yoblonski. As a result of your generosity, SRI is continuing the residency study of the shark populations of the Galapagos Islands.

Why is this so important? Because Ecuadorian commercial fisheries are pressuring the Galapagos Marine Reserve to permit longline fisheries for sharks. The fisheries claim that if they don't catch the sharks in the Reserve, others will catch them outside the Reserve. However, if SRI data confirms that some shark species are resident to the Reserve, the continued prohibition against longline fishing within the Reserve can be justified.

## Research vessel destroyed by arson

The R350,000 vessel *White Pointer*, used as a platform to document white shark behavior in False Bay, South Africa, was destroyed by arsonists. According to forensics experts, the fire started at two different locations when the boat was moored with all power off. Police believe the boat was targeted as result of the white shark attack on surfer J.P. Andrew by those opposed to chumming False Bay for sharks. If so, arsonists burned the wrong boat; *White Pointer* is the only one of the three licensed shark dive operations in the area that does not employ chumming to attract sharks. The only people who would gun for us are those against sharks, because our work is to educate people and to conserve sharks," said *White Pointer* owner, Chris Fallows.

## Costa Rica sharks under Threat

Costa Rica, one of the few countries that has banned shark finning, is also a major exporter of shark fins, 533 tonnes last year alone. According to official figures, most of the fins went to Asia. How many sharks died to produce such an enormous export? The average weight of the animals was 20 kilos and fins barely represent 5% of the weight, that is, one kilo, making it easy to estimate of the number of sharks killed in order to export 533 tonnes of fins: 533,000 sharks! And that represents *only* sharks killed in the waters around Costa Rica.

How long can our seas tolerate such a massive extraction of sharks? How much have shark populations declined in the region over the last few years? We know the decline is significant because even the official data shows that fishing activity has dramatically increased in the last decade. For example, in 1994, 20 tonnes of shark fins were landed at ports on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica. In 1998, that number rose to 217 tonnes. Although more recent official shark fin landing figures are lacking, the exportation figure of 533 tonnes speaks volumes.



Costa Rica's Fishery Law was passed in 1948, and is long overdue for reform. It simply has too many loopholes that facilitate finning and the indiscriminate slaughter of sharks.

SRI has obtained permits to initiate research at Cocos Island. Data we collect will be used to help the Costa Rican Government and the Cocos Island National Park establish protection for sharks at Cocos. The first field expedition is scheduled for September 2004. Contact SRI at (609) 921-3522 or [info@sharks.org](mailto:info@sharks.org) if you are interested in helping with the research at Cocos Island.

## News from the Field

**Holbox, Mexico** Joan David has been on-site since early June, documenting behavior of the large numbers of whale sharks that seasonally visit the island. She is also compiling a photographic catalogue of individual sharks.



**False Bay, South Africa** Neil Hammerschlag has been studying behavior of white sharks and recording their aerial displays.

**Manta & Guayaquil, Ecuador** In June, Eric Cheng, Alex Antoniou, Matt Potenski, Suzanne Allman, Claire Davies, and Natalie Piszek of SRI, and Carlos Villón of the University of Guayaquil, documented the artisanal fishery for sharks at Manta, Ecuador.



**Ningaloo Reef, Australia** On May 25, 2003, when SRI researcher Suzy Quasnichka filmed this whale shark that had been severely bitten by other species of sharks, including a

white shark, its wounds were still bleeding. When she filmed it again four days later, some healing had already begun. The shark clearly survived its injuries; making front-page news in Australia when - scarred but healthy - it visited Ningaloo Reef again this year.

Suzy recently spent a fortnight onboard the *Naturalist* with the Western Australia Fisheries Shark Project to the Montebello Islands along the north coast of Western Australia. She reports that they tagged a few tiger sharks, but mostly sandbar, grey nurse, dusky and pig-eye sharks, and hammerheads.



**Diu, India** Commander Patil and his team have completed an SRI feasibility study to examine the potential of whale



shark ecotourism at Diu, a Union Territory, and establish parameters for an assessment of the population of whale sharks that may still remain there following the wholesale slaughter of the species in the area. Prior to the year 2000, the area may have seen the greatest concentration of the sharks in the world, but thousands were 'harvested' for the Asian markets, and only one was seen during the recent study. However, the study lacked the usual aerial support and the only boat available to search



Commander Patil cooks dinner on board the trawler in its kitchen / toilet / lounge. Did someone say that field research is easy or glamorous?

for sharks was a local trawler. It is hoped that an aerial study may reveal that enough sharks remain and upon which an ecotourism industry may be established in the area by local entrepreneurs.

## Spreading the Word....



Suzy Quasnichka, Dr. Erich Ritter and Maria Munn at the London Dive Show.

At SeaSpace in Houston, Texas, Joan David, head of our Texas office, staffed SRI's booth and met with thousands of divers.



At OceanFest, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Tom Jerome and Kathleen Jeffers staffed SRI's booth and presented seminars.

## Field Expeditions

<b>Cocos Island:</b> Sept 17 - 29	<b>La Paz, Mexico:</b> Oct 2, -9, 2004
<b>Guadalupe Island:</b> Nov 26 - 30, 2004	<b>Utila:</b> Feb 5 - 12, 2005
<b>Galapagos Islands:</b> July 31 - August 9, 2005	Feb 12 - 19, 2005
August 8 - 16, 2005	<b>Thailand:</b> Wait-list only

All expedition volunteers must be certified divers and pay their own expenses, some of which are deductible from US Federal Income taxes.

Galapagos Adventures has a special offer for anyone making a \$150 donation to SRI. (The donations to SRI are 100% tax-deductible.) Each donor will receive an Eric Chen poster and CD slide show, plus a \$150 discount coupon valid on a dive trip booked through them to the Galapagos Islands. The coupon can also be used to defray a participant's expenses on any SRI expedition to the Galapagos.

## Member's Bookshelf

**Funding Exploration** by Dr. William F. Vartorella \$36 paperback, \$44.95 cloth-bound, plus S&H. This is an indispensable guide for all field researchers. To order, call Marco Polo Monographs at 866-966-6288. MasterCard, Visa & Discover cards are accepted.

## Thank you to our Supporters

- Amphibico
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- Underwater Video Images
- Lauren Banawich & friends: Charlotte, Joe, Josh, Daniel & Miss Isherwood of Liverpool, England .
- Grete Slaugh & Cedar Gonzales of Salt Lake City, Utah, who conducted a fundraiser for SRI

## GLOBAL SHARK ATTACK FILE

**AUSTRALIA:** April 26, diver Chai Griffen sustained puncture wounds on his wrist from a wobbegong shark. June 10, a bronze whaler shark lacerated the foot of body-boarder Tom O'Brien. There were two other incidents at Floreat Beach in June and a fatality at Margaret River that are being investigated by Terry & Valerie Peake.

**BAHAMAS:** May 18, SRI member Wolfgang Leader was free-diving when his arm was lacerated by a Caribbean reef shark. Wolfgang considers this a 'provoked incident'.

**BRAZIL:** May 22, Naiane Bringer was bitten by a shark and next day Valmir Silva sustained serious injuries. Both incidents took place at Recife.

**SOUTH AFRICA:** On April 5, surfer J.P. Andrew's leg was severed in False Bay and on June 2, perlemoen poacher Nkosinathi Mayaba was killed by a shark at Gansbaai. Both incidents involved white sharks.

**TONGA:** April 13, one man died and another was injured by a shark after their boat sank 30 miles offshore.

**USA: Alabama** - July 2, a shark bit the foot of Trenton Martin. **California** - May 28, a shark bit the board of surfer Bernard Connor, Jr. at Salmon Creek. **Florida** - May 22, Michaela Grogan's foot was bitten at Jacksonville Beach, next day the calf and foot of a body-boarder was lacerated at St. Augustine, and on June 10, Mitchell Anderson was bitten on his wrist and arm by a 4' shark. **Hawaii** - April 7, Willis McInnis was fatally injured by a tiger shark. **Texas** - May 29, Ryan Eckstrum sustained puncture wounds on his shin from a 3' to 5' shark at Galveston.

**NOTE:** Dr. Terry & Valerie Peake have started to place the Australian shark attack database on line. It can be viewed at:

<http://www.auscyber.net/shark/casefile.html>

A warm welcome to Clay Creswell, GSAF's new case investigator for the Carolinas.

A special 'thank you' to SRI intern Jen Gaudin for all the long hours spent researching archival attacks. Jen is off to the UK shortly and will be missed.

**One person really CAN make a difference...**

SRI member Walt Brenner wrote to Madame Chou's Chinese restaurant in Philadelphia, asking them to remove sharkfin soup from the menu and explaining why. And they promptly did just that!

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**WWW.SHARKS.ORG**

## Dive with Sharks - In an Aquarium!



Ever wish you could dive in the Living Seas Aquarium at Disney Epcot? Well now you can! The Dive Quest program at the aquarium is open to all certified divers

(ages 10 through 14 must be accompanied by an adult). The three-hour program includes a look behind the scenes, an educational presentation, T-shirt, certificate, and a 40-minute dive in the 5.7 million-gallon salt-water tank with a variety of fish, rays and sharks. All equipment is included; just bring your bathing suit, C-card and mask. Reservations are required. Call (407) 939-8687 The regular cost is \$140 but SRI members receive a 10% discount. No cameras allowed; videos of your dive may be purchased for \$35.



The Florida Aquarium in Tampa, an SRI sponsor, also has a Dive with the Sharks program, open to certified divers ages 15 and up & SRI members receive a 10% discount as well. The 90-minute

program includes an educational presentation, a behind-the-scenes tour, and a 30-minute dive in the shark tank. Divers follow a divemaster into the tank through the shark cage. Afterwards, participants receive a T-shirt, informational booklets and may purchase photos of their dive. Divers can expect to meet zebra sharks,

blacktips, nurse sharks, whitetip reef sharks and sandtigers in the Shark Bay tank.

Tom Jerome in  
the Florida  
Aquarium



## Alternative to DAN

There is a new fish in the sea: DiveAssure (<http://www.diveassure.com/new/usa/>). For many years DAN (Divers Accident Network) was the only insurance provider that issued policies for dive accidents. Now DiveAssure Association USA offers benefits matching those of DAN but at a lower cost. Benefits include worldwide emergency services & doctors and nurses available 24x7x365. Emergency medical expenses, trip cancellation and interruption coverage, discounts on motor club, car rentals, moving services and magazine subscriptions are included. Confirmation is e-mailed in minutes (upon receipt of payment) and includes your membership certificate. Platinum membership is just \$95/year. SRI is a Dive Assure Partner, which means for every member that enrolls through SRI, DiveAssure donates a percentage of the enrollment fee to SRI. Contact SRI for enrollment information.

If you have internet access, visit the site below and watch the movie clip: "The No Seafood Grille":  
<http://www.shiftingbaselines.org/news/news12.htm>