

Shark Research Institute

Member Newsletter



Shark Research Institute Global Headquarters

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SRI Director Honored



SRI is proud to announce that our Director, Leonard Compagno, Ph.D. was awarded the 2008 Gilchrist Medal for "outstanding contribution to the enhancement of marine and coastal science in South Africa, including the Southern Ocean."

The Gilchrist Memorial Medal was established in 1987 by the South African National Committee for Oceanographic Research (SANCOR) in association with the South African Marine Corporation Limited (Safmarine) to be awarded to distinguished marine scientists. The Medal serves as recognition of the recipient's contributions to marine science, stimulates excellence in South African marine science, and focuses attention on South Africa's marine and coastal environments. SANCOR, now known as the South African Network for Coastal and Oceanic Research, still administers the awarding of the medal.

Dr. Compagno has contributed enormously to the knowledge of cartilaginous fishes off southern Africa and world-wide. His scientific achievements have been broadly recognized and led to several prestigious awards starting early in his career. In 1965, he was awarded scholarships to Harvard University and Stanford University for graduate work, followed by a U.S. National Science Foundation postdoctoral award in 1972 and CSIR postdoctoral fellowship in 1983. He has held several distinguished positions, including Professorship at Tiburon Center for Environmental Studies at San Francisco State University, and Research Associate at J.L.B. Smith Institute of Ichthyology.

Currently, Dr. Compagno is also Honorary Research Associate at the Department of Zoology, University of Cape Town, Fellow of the Royal

Society of South Africa, Regional Vice-Chair position and membership of the Executive Board of the IUCN Shark Specialist Group, and Chief Scientist at Save Our Seas Foundation Shark Centre in Kalk Bay. He is also the Founder and Director of the Shark Research Center at Iziko South African Museum in Cape Town.

The volume of publications Dr. Compagno has produced is impressive. Several of his papers are among the most frequently cited in chondrichthyan literature, and some, like the *FAO Catalog of World Sharks* (1984, 2001 and ongoing), and his original PhD thesis that in expanded version was published by Princeton University Press (*Sharks of the Order Carcharhiniformes* (1988, reprinted with new forward by Blackburn Press in 2003) are classics, as is *Sharks of the World* (co-authored with Sarah Fowler and Mark Dando and published by Princeton University Press and Harper Collins), the first-ever field guide to sharks for the general public. Overall, there are more than 500 scientific items on his account published to date. His taxonomic work has been extremely prolific. Among the new taxa of cartilaginous fishes that he has described there are: six family-group taxa, ten genus-group taxa, 27 species to date (plus several published by his students). There is one new genus and five new species of southern African sharks, rays and chimaeras, and accounts of several new species in preparation.

Apart from his many achievements, he is a warm and generous person, often going out of his way to support, promote, and encourage younger colleagues – an attribute of only the greatest minds. This way, somewhat indirectly, he is influencing more than just his collaborators and students but also numerous other scientists who will further advance marine biological sciences.

The Gilchrist Medal recognizes Dr. Compagno's tireless dedication, enormous contributions, and the unique signature that he has imprinted on the field of marine biology and far beyond.

Captive White Shark . . .

A young female white shark that was exhibited at California's Monterey Bay Aquarium for 11 days has been released into the wild. The shark was less than a year old, possibly even less than six months old. She was 4.5 feet in length and weighed 56 pounds.

The animal care staff decided to return her to the sea because she ate only once while in the million-gallon Outer Bay exhibit. Ken Peterson, communication director of the aquarium said that it is mystery why this shark wasn't eating, but each shark is an individual.

The aquarium has housed three other white sharks, each for a period of four to six months before they were returned to the sea. Each white shark, including this shark, was tagged with a satellite tag that documents the animal's movements in the wild. The shark was caught again just 22 miles from where the aquarium had released her. A fisherman had deployed his net to catch thresher sharks and found the young white shark in his gear when he checked it. He put the shark in his bait well, and called the aquarium. The fisherman checked the shark for injuries, and set her free. He reported that she was 'very lively' and it appeared she had recently fed.

Albino Whale Shark



This female whale shark, believed to be the only one of its kind, was spotted by Antonio Moreano in the Galapagos islands off the coast of

Ecuador. "It was 4:30 pm and I and six guests were at Darwin's Island, set to make the fourth dive of the day," said Mr Moreano. "As we were on the boat checking our equipment I saw a big white thing by the surface of the water. At the beginning I could not tell what it was - I had never seen anything like it before. So I decided to put my mask on and put my face over into the water. I free dived to 50ft and finally managed to get some pictures of it," he said. "I kept swimming with it and I got very close - even the eye was white. But no one has seen this albino whale shark since."

. . .and a Captive Whale Shark

Dubai: A whale shark rescued off the coast of Jebel Ali and placed in the Palm Jumeirah Atlantis hotel aquarium will be tagged and released.

The 4-m juvenile whale shark was found in shallow waters, fatigued and disorientated, Due to

the high sea temperature and salinity of the water where the whale shark was found, the decision was made to transport the whale shark to Atlantis for medical care and observation. A custom-made transport unit with a highly advanced marine life transport system was used to ensure the safety and well-being of the animal.

The whale shark was placed in the 11-million-litre Ambassador Lagoon - one of the largest aquariums in the world. The shark has been monitored 24 hours a day since it arrived and extensive data on its swim patterns, feeding and behavior has been recorded. Ibrahim Al Zu'bi, environmental advisor to the Emirates Diving Association (EDA), said that in the past his organization has received many calls about whale sharks which found their way to the Arabian Gulf. He added that while the whale shark will offer great opportunities for learning and awareness it should not be kept in the aquarium long term. "It should be released as soon as possible," he said.

Atlantis has plans to tag the shark and let it go. The health and well-being of all marine life is the number one priority at Atlantis, the hotel said in a statement. Alan Leibman, President and Managing Director of Atlantis noted, "Education, conservation and research go hand."



Sharks in (and under) Glass

On September 16, British artist Damien Hirst sold his "The Kingdom" (a dead tiger shark in formaldehyde) for £9.5million (\$16,944,685.69) at auction at Sotheby's in London.

A 56-piece collection of glass sharks, acquired during the past nine years by Underwater Adventures Aquarium owner Todd Peterson, is on exhibit. To view the sharks go to:

www.sharky.tv/glass.html.

Expeditions

Ted Danson, the *Cheers* actor, who founded *Oceana*, notes that the UK, the fourth largest shark fishing nation in Europe, takes nearly 8,000 metric tonnes of sharks and rays, mostly in the Northeast Atlantic. Much of this catch, which includes endangered sharks and rays, is sold as "rock salmon" and ends up in fish and chips. "In general we are over fishing all of our fisheries around the world. Cod, which used to be in your fish and chips, has become so over-fished that we cannot find enough so we are turning to something that is called 'rock salmon' but that is really the endangered shark species spiny dog fish," says Danson. "A lot of your fish and chips come from this species of shark. It used to be the most abundant shark in the ocean but now it is down to five per cent of what it used to be." The policies on shark fishing in the UK need to be strengthened, says Danson, or the sharks will be fished out.

Thank You to our Supporters!

We are very grateful for the support of:

- The Adikes Family Foundation
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- Craig Grube
- The Freeman Foundation
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- The Philanthropic Group
- The Rohauer Collection Foundation
- San Diego Shark Diving
- Greg Sparks
- Underwater Adventures Aquarium
- Underwater Video Images
- The Wave Foundation
- World Wildlife Fund

Expeditions

Spaces for sport divers are available on the following expeditions. Please note: These are *not* dive vacations; they are research expeditions. All participants will be expected to assist SRI scientists to gather and record data, and thus costs are partially deductible from your US Federal income taxes. To reserve a space or obtain more details, go to: www.sharks.org/expeditions

Whale Sharks

Holbox, Mexico: July 23-27, 2009. \$1,500 per person.

Philippines: April 2009. Call HQ for details.

Bassas Da India & Europa (French islands off Madagascar) *If interested, please contact HQ.*

White Sharks

Guadalupe Island: 5 day — October 6-10, 12-16 or 18-22; November 1-5, 2008. \$2,750 per diver.

Guadalupe Island: 7 day — October 24-30, 2008 \$3,150 per diver.

Sandtiger Sharks

North Carolina — May 15, 16, & 17, 2009 (before the start of the hurricane season). Call HQ for details.

Upcoming Events

October 11, 2008: OceanBlue Divers and the Women Divers Hall of Fame will celebrate the second anniversary of the dive club's founding with a Daytime Seminar Series featuring SRI president Stan Waterman and dive celebrities at the Bleeker Street Theater, 25 Bleeker St, in New York City from 10 am to 4 pm, The event be followed by an Evening Gala at BLVD, 199 Bowery in New York, beginning at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are available at:

www.oceanbluedivers.net/anniversary

October 22-28, 2008: DEMA Show at the Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, Nevada. SRI is one of the sponsors of the Ocean Summit, a one-day event held during the show on October 24th. All SRI members are welcome.

November 14-16, 2008: European Elasmobranch Association conference at the Oceanário de Lisboa, in Lisbon, Portugal.

January 14 - 17, 2009: Surf Expo at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, FL.

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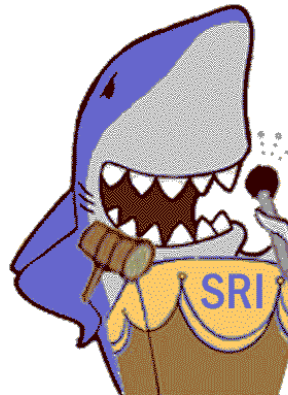
West African Shark Catches Plummet

Dakar (Senegal): Shark catches in West Africa dropped from 30,000 to 10,000 tons between 2002 and 2008, an expert of the sub-regional Fisheries Commission (CSRP) Mika Diop revealed in Dakar. "This drop in catch shows that the situation is critical in our seas," said Diop, at the opening of a three-day training workshop on the national action programmes for shark conservation. Not only the quantity of the catch but also the size of the species has decreased, stressing that the difference between the growing fishing effort and drop in catches is worrying. About fifteen species of shark "are endangered, seven of which are threatened with disappearance," he warned.

"The conservation of the shark population will enable us to restore and maintain the marine environment food balance and avoid the overgrowth of certain species which are not very viable economically for the population," pointed out Diop, who also said that the shark plays the role of policemen in maintaining the viability of the food chain in the marine ecosystem. The over-exploitation of the shark is chiefly due to the trade of its fins much demanded in Asia, and are worth about CFA 60,000 on the international market.

Governments were urged to re-examine the regulations on the fishing periods, zones and machines, as well as on customs duties, increase the cost of fishing licences, amongst other measures. The meeting brought together participants from member states of The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal and Sierra Leone, with only the Cape Verde being absent.

Update on SRI Summer Auction



Our very sincere thanks the following individuals and corporations who generously donated items for our summer auction: Adventure Aquarium, Jonathan Bird, William L. Bunting, Jr., Eric Cheng, Richard Ellis, Dean Fessler, Martha Watkins Gilkes, Dive Provo, Jupp Kerckerinck, David

Lenderman, Marie Levine, Sean Fisher & Mel Fisher's Treasures, Steve Nagiewicz, Olympus Dive Center, Patagonia, Rum Reggae, Steven Schachter, Shark Diver Magazine, Paul Sutherland, Underwater Adventures Aquarium, Hillary Vidars and Wyland. Thanks to their generosity, more than \$2,500 was raised for SRI's shark conservation and education outreach programs. And special thanks go to Carolyn Nickels who conducted the auction.

Our annual winter eBay auction will be held in late November. If you have unused dive vacations, services, books, photos, or anything weird and wonderful you'd be willing to donate, please call Marie at 609-921-3522 or email her at marie@sharks.org.

FYI: In August 2008, Ecuador's shark catches increased threefold over catches during May and June, with a total of over 1,300 tonnes of shark, 1,000 tonnes of which were landed in Manta, Ecuador's main fishing port.