

Shark Research Institute Newsletter



Shark Research Institute Global Headquarters

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SRI Welcomes Dr. Sylvia Earle as our new Honorary President



We welcome the world's most eloquent advocate for shark and conservation of the ocean — Dr. Sylvia Earle as SRI's new Honorary President and a member of SRI's Board of

Trustees. Dr. Earle has been a long-time supporter of SRI and now lends her considerable expertise to helping us reach our mission and goals. As Honorary President, Dr. Earle will become our spokesperson for ocean conservation and shark advocacy. SRI is a very powerful and passionate voice for shark conservation and now, with Dr. Earle, we will have the world's greatest ocean advocate leading us forward.

Dr. Earle was chief scientist for the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. She is a *National Geographic* Explorer-in-Residence. More recently, she led the Google Ocean Advisory Council, a team of 30 marine scientists providing content and scientific oversight for the "Ocean in Google Earth." To date, she has led over 70 expeditions, logging more than 6,500 hours underwater.

Among the more than 100 national and international honors she has received is the 2009 TED Prize for her proposal to establish a global network of marine protected areas. She calls these marine preserves "hope spots... to save and restore... the blue heart of the planet."

SRI couldn't have a finer champion than Dr. Earle," said Stephen Nagiewicz, Chair of the SRI Board, and we agree!

And Stan Waterman as SRI President Emeritus

For the past 17 years, Stan Waterman has served as SRI's Honorary President, won 5 Emmy Awards and in 2007 he was named a Legend of the Sea. Now, Stan says, "at age 87, the years are taking their toll." He wants to spend more time with his family,



lead an occasional dive trip and concentrate on writing. Stan requests, to lighten his load, that he serve instead as SRI's President Emeritus.

Sharks have known no better advocate than Stan: Filmmaker, diver and gentleman. He is one of the finest persons we know. We are proud to have worked with him for all these years, and thankful that he chose SRI as his cherished cause to protect and use as a vehicle to educate the world about the importance of sharks in the ocean ecosystem. Through Stan's photographic lens and unparalleled artistic eye, he has allowed the world to view sharks and our oceans through a sympathetic eye that both teaches and excites the public about the lives of sharks and tells why they are so important to the survival of our oceans.

Stan joins us in welcoming Dr. Sylvia Earle as SRI's new Honorary President. "Of all those of us who advocate for shark and ocean protection, no one is more respected, articulate and persuasive," says Stan. "Sylvia Earle is the best of the best!"

But don't worry, after nearly two decades of promoting SRI, Stan is not about to fade into retirement. The position of President Emeritus includes a lifetime seat on SRI's Board of Trustees, and Stan will continue to advise and guide SRI for many years to come.

A Victorious Veto in Palau

by Edward Dorson

On September 25th, 2009, the President of Palau made a UN proclamation of Palau's territorial waters as the "World's First National Shark Sanctuary." Now more positive change has taken place in Palau since President Toribiong's historic UN announcement:

On January 13th, Palau Senate Bill No. 8-50 - a destructive purse seining/tax exemption bill that was passed by Palau's National Congress - was vetoed by President Toribiong. The president said, "this bill does not promote the implementation of national objectives set forth in the Constitution with regards to conserving a resourceful natural environment or promoting the national economy." He added that "exempting certain companies from paying fish export tax contradicts the government's policy." He also proposed a fisheries summit to be held in late February in order to make sound fishing policy more beneficial for Palau and all of Micronesia, with the participation of neighboring Pacific countries.

A recap on the bill: Palau's Senate Bill No. 8-50 would have prevented Palauans from receiving tax export revenue for all catches along with assigning General Santos City in the Philippines as the new transshipment port (presently Malakal harbor in Palau). Without the tax collection incentive and with catches avoiding Palau's port, all Palauan regulatory oversight would have been removed — including preventing rampant shark fishing/finning, curtailing endangered species harvest, and control of overshooting quotas.

Palau's President Toribiong has now proved himself as having true leadership abilities, as well as a vision capable of seeing Palau's "sanctuary" as a promise he intends to actively fulfill — beyond just a rhetoric of stewardship within his UN announcement before the General Assembly.

Although vetoed, SB No. 8-50 can still become law by a 2/3rd overriding vote in Palau's National Congress (the OEK) within 30 days of its return to the Senate and the House of Delegates. With this possibility, I urge that people lend their support to the president's stance.

All congratulatory messages backing President Toribiong's veto can be sent to: President Toribiong, President of the Republic of Palau: rop.president@palaunet.com and cc'd to:

- The Senate of the Eighth Olbiil Era Kelulau (OEK): senate@alaunet.com

- Speaker of the House of Delegates: oekspeaker@palaunet.com
- House Committee on Maritime and Fisheries: hod.clerk@gmail.com
- Palau Chamber of Commerce: pcoc@palaunet.com
- Palau Conservation Society: pcs@palaunet.com
- Belau Tourism Association: bta@palaunet.com
- Palau Visitors Authority: pva@visit-palau.com

Expeditions

Spaces are available on the following expeditions. *Spaces fill quickly.* To reserve a space or obtain more details, call SRI Headquarters at 609.921.3522, or go to:

www.sharks.org/expeditions

Whale Sharks

Utila, Honduras: *March 13-20, 2010, & March 20-27, 2010, are special whale shark observation/training weeks. \$1,880 per diver. Other weeks, \$1,760 per diver.*

Donsol, Philippines: *April 26-31, 2010, with Dr. Jennifer V. Schmidt, \$1,100 per person*

Holbox, Mexico with Doc Anes: *July 22-26, 2010, \$1,500 per person.*

White Sharks

False Bay, South Africa, with Chris Fallows: *July 22 to 31, 2010, \$3,900 per person. Cage diving optional. This is the prime time to view white shark predation activity. 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.*

Multiple Species

Palau with Dean Fessler: *April 2-11, 2010, \$2,000 per diver*

Wolf & Darwin, Galapagos Islands with Amos Nachoum: *August 7-22, 2010, on the Sky Dancer. \$12,900 to \$12,500, per diver (\$12,255 to \$11,875 for SRI members).*

Lembah Straits, Indonesia with Tom Campbell: *September 18-29, 2010, \$3,104 per diver. September 30-October 11, 2010, \$2,696 per diver.*

For space & more information on these and other expeditions to **Isla Guadalupe, Saba & LaPaz**, contact HQ at 609.921.3522 .

Thank You to Our Supporters!

We are very grateful for the continued support of:

- The Adikes Family Foundation
- Adjacent to One
- Adventure Aquarium
- Wendy Benchley
- William Bunting, Jr.
- Patricia Chock
- Dr. Sylvia Earle
- Ben Fackler
- The Freeman Foundation
- Max & Victoria Goodwin
- Edmund Grainger
- Greater Than One, Inc.
- Craig Grube
- The Horgan Family
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- Jupp Baron Kerckerinck zur Borg
- The Martin Revson Foundation
- Beth & Tom McKenna
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- Project Aware Foundation
- Ted Przybocki
- The Rohauer Collection Foundation
- Rolex Watch USA
- RPX
- Wiltraud Salm
- San Diego Shark Diving
- The Shark Finatics
- Greg Sparks
- State Street Global Advisors
- Barbara & Donald Tober
- Underwater Adventures Aquarium
- Underwater Video Images
- The Verrill Foundation
- Al Vinjamur
- The Wave Foundation
- Wiltraud Salm
- World Wildlife Fund
- Josip Zeko

Important - SB2169!

SB2169 has been introduced to the Hawaii State Legislature. The bill prohibits the sale, trade or distribution of shark fins in Hawaii. In addition to removing sharkfin soup from menus of Hawaii's restaurants, it closes some of the loop holes in existing legislation that currently allow container loads of shark fins to be sold and transshipped in Honolulu harbor. If the bill passes, it will serve as impetus for other states to do the same, and provide an example that they may follow.

Public hearing are now being scheduled. If you are unable to attend one of the hearings, please send a fax or email to the bill's sponsors.

Senator Clayton Hee (fax: 586-7334):

email: senhee@capitol.hawaii.gov and

Senator Robert Bunda (fax: 808-586-6091):

Email: senbunda@capitol.hawaii.gov

Please also send a copy of your letter to:

Senator Taniguchi (fax: 808-586-6461);

Email: sentaniguchi@capitol.hawaii.gov

Mark your Calendars

- **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, NJ. Tickets may be purchased online at beneaththesea.org

New, For Members

Most of us have too many membership cards. Instead of a card that lies forgotten in the back of a drawer, SRI is offering something unique. Everyone who joins or renews their SRI membership in 2010 will receive a numbered membership "tag" that can be worn on a key ring or their dive gear, and the first 50 members who donate \$250 or more will receive a tag numbered between 0001 and 0050. The tag shows your friends and colleagues that you are committed to shark and ocean conservation. Each year these collectible tags will feature a different SRI project.



In December, Dery Bennett passed away. He had been on our Board since 1991, mentoring us as he did so many organizations. Dery, a tall, lanky ex-Navy diver, reporter and writer with unwavering principles, joined the newly-formed American Littoral Society (ALS) in 1968. Under his stewardship ALS grew to be the most effective coastal environmental organization on the eastern seaboard of the USA. Tim Dillingham, who took over as executive director of ALS when Dery retired in 2003, has written a wonderful tribute to him, noting his many accomplishments. It is on the ALS website:

<http://www.littoralsociety.org/>

Those of us who knew Dery very well have our special memories of him too. The way he cajoled money from a huge oil company, then used those funds to sue them (they seemed to constantly be doing stuff that irked him and he loved the symmetry of using their own money to force them to do the right thing.) In all the years we worked with Dery he never raised his voice; he used his sharp wit and laconic humor instead.

His office was a mini-museum. Prominent was his Elvis Presley collection. There were weird and wonderful posters, bumper stickers, cartoons that made him laugh, strange things that the tide deposited on the beach, dollar bills that he won in bets from colleagues pasted on his door, the fish jaws slung atop his desk lamp, overflowing bookcases, fishing gear stacked in the corners, rows of seashells and etc. A lot of etc! Then there were his trucks — he painted horseshoe crabs on one and it was invariably full of bait buckets, fishing gear, and more etc.

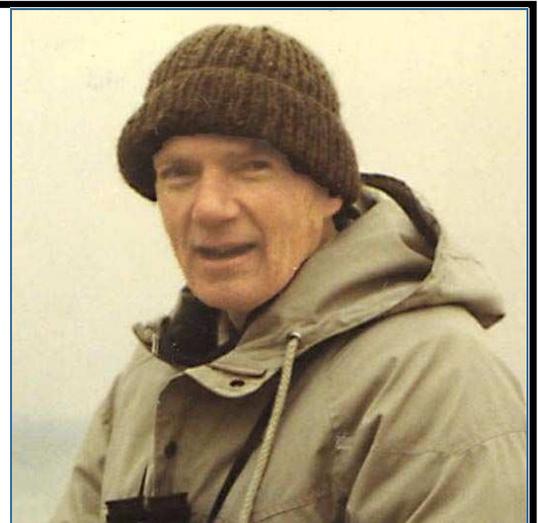
Dery was FUN! You enjoyed being with him, no matter what you were doing — it was always work, but with Dery around, work was fun. He made you laugh. He used to say, "You've got to laugh. If you can't laugh, you're going go nuts."

With Dery, nothing was impossible — it was simply that nobody had done it yet, so "we'd better get going and figure a way to do it," And so we made a plan and did it. Twenty years ago it was "how do we put a tag on a whale shark so we can track where it goes" (we sure solved that one!) Another time it was writing a book that we wanted to read and discovered that nobody had written it yet (did that too).

Dery loved a challenge; he'd take on the toughest projects — with a grin and a twinkle in his eye.

A Celebration of Dery's life will be held on February 27, 2010 in the Chapel at Sandy Hook. A simple reception will follow at Building 18, Hartshorne Drive, Sandy Hook to reminisce, share "tall" tales, and add your favorite moments. If you plan to attend, please send a blank e-mail with the word Yes and the number of people who will attend in the subject line to eileen@littoralsociety.org.

We hope you can join us.



Dery Bennett (1930-2009)



Whale Shark Study - Mafia Island, Tanzania



Whale shark ecotourism has become a major tourist attraction and an important economic resource in areas where the sharks are found.

Despite the high profile this species has in the media, whale sharks are elusive, and much remains unknown about their biology and behavior — information critical to effectively protect their populations.

One of the few locations in the world where whale sharks aggregate are the waters west of Mafia Island, Tanzania. The area presented SRI with a unique opportunity to study a reliable population of whale sharks with only a light ecotourism impact.

In 2006, to determine parameters of whale shark population structure, behaviors, and movements, a study of the whale sharks off Mafia Island was proposed and SRI applied for and received a research permit from the Tanzanian government.

SRI researcher Matthew Potenski initiated the field surveys and continued to tag whale sharks off Mafia Island through March 2009. Visual ID tags were deployed and sharks were photographed and catalogued, suggesting that as many as 60 whale sharks utilize the area.

In 2007, WWF-Tanzania and the Wave Foundation of the Newport Aquarium joined the project by providing funds for satellite tags deployed by SRI. Satellite tag data proved very interesting and showed strong North-South movement (very different from tag deployments in Mozambique that showed strong East-West movements.) Habitat usage, inferred from diving behavior and temperature ranges the sharks encountered, fell mostly into the normal ranges for this species. One shark completed a dive that hit the maximum depth a tag can record (1,285 meters) before the failsafe triggered its release.

In 2008, the Mafia Island Whale Shark Conservation Society (WHASCOS) joined the project. Matthew worked with WHASCOS and trained a whale shark survey team. The survey team collected data twice-weekly during the entire year, recording 142 sightings of whale sharks, including 53 re-sightings of tagged sharks. The population of whale sharks utilizing Mafia waters is comprised mostly of sub-adult whale sharks from 2m to 7m total

length. This suggests that Mafia may be a secondary nursery area and an important habitat as the animals grow until maturity. One 13m individual, a mature adult, was seen, which suggests that adults may occasionally use the area around Mafia as well.

SRI's findings at Mafia have been duplicated by researchers working in Kenya and Mozambique, countries bordering Tanzania to the north and south. It appears that the whale sharks in Mafia are exhibiting behavioral and life history patterns that are typical for the species in the Western Indian Ocean.

However, the crucial difference is that whale sharks in both Kenya and Mozambique are highly seasonal and cannot be reliably found there throughout the year, while whale sharks occur off Mafia Island throughout the entire year.

The year-round sightings of whale sharks is providing valuable insights into whale shark behavioral patterns at Mafia Island and a sense of the temporal fluctuation of whale shark abundance. They suggest that Mafia may be a site of great importance to whale sharks.

The use of multiple methodologies has allowed different facets of whale shark ecology to be examined and set baseline data to which continued monitoring can be compared (especially as ecotourism grows). Additional data is still needed to determine multiyear patterns in population structure. Further study, with elements including automated telemetry, water quality parameters, and food abundance may yield clues to why Mafia Island exhibits such residence time in its aggregation of whale sharks.

SRI's objective has been to learn more about the whale sharks in Mafia waters, and work with the local community in Mafia to raise awareness and stewardship for whale sharks as a sustainable natural resource. The aggregation of whale sharks at Mafia Island has been shown to be a robust population that follows predictable patterns, and their habitat usage patterns make them accessible for tourist interaction.

While in Kenya, Matthew met with other whale shark researchers from East Africa to discuss large scale patterns in whale shark behavior, and promote future collaboration. To effectively protect the whale shark and ecotourism interests, Tanzania, Kenya, and Mozambique will have to cooperate in developing management strategies.

Countdown to CITES

Petitions and campaigns are valuable because they raise awareness and alter public opinion, but sharks need legal protection that can be enforced. National protection (within a country's 200 mile EEZ zone) is enforceable, but much of the looting of our natural resources – sharks, whales, dolphins, fish – takes place on the high seas.

Of the UN treaty organizations that deal with species protection, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) is the largest — 175 nations have agreed to abide by CITES decisions. CITES was formed in the late 1960s. To date, only three species of sharks have ever been listed on CITES Appendix II, and that's because of our efforts. Products of Appendix II animals may not be exported or imported across the borders of member nations without special permits.

SRI sent our scientists to CITES in 2002, presented data to the delegates, and both the whale shark and basking shark were placed on Appendix II.

Again, in 2004, we sent delegates to CITES and the white shark, too, was listed on Appendix II.

CITES convenes again March 13-25, 2010 at Doha, Qatar. This time, however, a record **eight species** of sharks are being proposed for Appendix II! We are sending five top people* to CITES who will fight to get the sharks listed on Appendix II. (And, they will be working hard for all other marine species proposed for CITES protection.)

Here is the catch: It is very costly to stay in Qatar. Hotel and CITES fees run about \$5,000 per person. Foundations want sure bets, and being able to win CITES protection for a species is never a sure thing due to the many political and corporate agendas and machinations. The only thing that is certain, is that CITES isn't for the faint-of-heart. This is where we clash head-to-head with the sharkfin industry, the whaling industry, the ivory trade – then we go back to our hotels each night, chug Maalox, and charge back to the fray each morning.

And so, we need your financial help. We will be your voices at CITES. Please, send whatever you can afford to help us fight for sharks and the oceans. We are grateful for *any amount* you can contribute to this cause.

*These are the people SRI is sending to CITES:

- Leonard J. V. Compagno, Ph.D.: The world's top shark scientist, author of the United Nation' FAO Catalog of World Sharks, and more than 1,000 publications and Director of SRI.
- Marie Levine: Executive Director of SRI, a seasoned advocate for sharks, worked at CITES in 2002 on the successful listing of whale sharks and basking sharks, and in 2004 for the listing of white sharks.
- Jupp Baron Kerckerinck zur Borg: CEO of SRI, internationally-known shark conservationist, and television personality.
- Edward Dorson: SRI Conservation strategist. Edward has also worked with Sea Shepherd, many marine conservation organizations and governments.
- Lesley Rochat: Director of SRI Media Productions, conservationist, filmmaker, and an exceptionally eloquent speaker.

Note: All the people we are sending to CITES are multi-lingual.

Checks can be sent to SRI, PO Box 40, Princeton, NJ 08540, USA. To donate online, go to: www.sharks.org. Click on the DONATE NOW link on the home page and it will take you to our secure server.

