

Shark Research Institute Newsletter



Shark Research Institute Global Headquarters

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REPORT ON CITES



Despite continuing carnage in the ocean, all proposed marine species were refused protections at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the UN treaty organization which met last month in Doha, Qatar (as CITES CoP15; the 15th convening of parties). When it came to marine life, the delegates decided that scientific evidence of imminent extinction was not reason enough to protect marine species against over exploitation. The outcome for aquatic species at this CITES was exactly what CITES was set up to prevent.

In a significant departure from the past, at least two-thirds of the delegates invariably voted as Japan dictated regarding marine species. Japan is brazenly undermining every marine regulatory convention that may affect its ability to exploit the world's oceans. In the critical proposal to effect a trade ban on the Atlantic bluefin tuna; the high value of Atlantic bluefin tuna (where a single tuna

was recently sold in Tokyo's Tsukiji fish market for a record \$175,000) was pivotal in compelling Japan to orchestrate a full-scale campaign against a trade ban in the species. The species has been reduced by 80% due to the repeated failure of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) to adopt quotas recommended by its own scientists. At present, Japan imports 80% of all Atlantic bluefins, and have immense freezing capacity to keep all they can seize. They're actually banking on this species' extinction – upon which the remaining stockpile of bluefins will soar in price even further.

Japan's ambitions extend to the domination of all marine resources. Delegations are sent by Japan to developing countries to buy their votes in the form of everything from fleets of Japanese cars to hard cash. Japan Fisheries provides such 'aid' to voting countries including a slew of island states in the Caribbean and the Pacific and even landlocked nations provided they agree to vote as Japan dictates at treaty organizations such as CITES and the International Whaling Commission (IWC). Maseyuku Komatsu, a senior official of Japan Fisheries, stated in a television interview that Japan saw nothing wrong in buying votes. He described the practice as a 'major tool' and admitted that a number of countries have accepted aid in return for backing Japan.

"Not so long ago the oceans seemed infinite in their capacity to produce riches, and signs that this was not so was hidden by our inability to peer into the depths," wrote Frank Pope. "Science has now stripped back the veil and revealed the extent of the depletion. It is this science that Japan and its staunch allies, China, Greenland, Iceland, and others have chosen to ignore." Lesley Rochat, SRI's Director of Media Productions who blogged from CITES CoP15, compared this CITES to a high-stakes game in which the survival of a species was bartered, traded or sold.

On the night before the bluefin tuna vote, Dr. Sylvia Earle, SRI's Honorary President, spoke to delegates at an event where awards were given to spotlight the conservation efforts of Palau and the Maldives. She emphasized the critical need to protect tunas, sharks, and all aquatic beings. Dr. Earle said: "We have ten years, no more, it is happening right now in our time. If we do nothing and continue the way we are, it will be all over. More and more will simply vanish. And it will be our fault."

At the very same time as Sylvia Earle spoke so eloquently in her appeal for rational behavior, Japan's embassy was hosting an impromptu bluefin sushi and sake party for the other delegates (a rarity in Doha where alcohol consumption is discouraged), while applying last-minute pressure to secure their votes to condemn the bluefins.

The tuna proposal was defeated the next day. Jupp Baron Kerckerinck zur Borg, CEO of SRI, commented on the disastrous vote which denied protection for the bluefin tuna, "There was more concern about politics and money than about the trade in endangered species. The way the discussion was cut off during the debate was shameful; there was no real discussion at all. Japan's actions at CITES CoP15 was the oceanic equivalent of the attack on Pearl Harbor."

Unfortunately for other marine species, Japan's campaign made waves far beyond the tuna. Sharks are in deep trouble thanks to China's appetite for using their fins in soup, and both China and Indonesia joined Japan in opposing the shark proposals. Millions of sharks are killed each year to supply the Asian market; and sharks don't reproduce fast enough to endure this kind of mass destruction. Scalloped and smooth hammerhead populations alone have declined by 83% in the northwest Atlantic and by 99.9% in the Mediterranean during the past 25 years.

True to form, the night before the shark proposals were to be voted upon, Japan hosted a second lavish party, this time serving up shark fin soup. At CITES CoP12 in 2002 and CoP13 in 2004, SRI Director Dr. Leonard Compagno, the world's leading authority on sharks, presented compelling data which resulted in the protective listing of whale sharks, basking sharks and white sharks. "But at CoP15," said Dr. Compagno, "it appeared to be about promoting trade in endangered species, not regulating it." Far from favoring a ban, nations voted against even the most basic monitoring of the shark trade, a trade also worth billions.

Rwanda's delegate, who supported the shark listing, remarked, "science has been set aside for politics." Even a proposal to protect red and pink corals was defeated. The corals – used only in the trinket industry – have all but vanished from the Mediterranean and are being stripped from the Pacific as well.

CITES: HOW IT WORKS

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) is a United Nations treaty organization created in the late 1960s to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival in the wild. It has become a battlefield because of its power; it is where global environmental laws are made. CITES can ban trade in a species (an Appendix 1 listing), or require that trade remains sustainable (Appendix 2).

Every member nation that is a party to CITES has a single vote. A proposal to list a species on a CITES appendix can only be made by a member nation and a 2/3rds majority is required to place (or remove) a species on an Appendix. Also attending CITES are conservation NGOs such as Shark Research Institute, and NGOs representing cartels such as the sharkfin industry. NGOs disseminate information to the parties and lobby for or against the species' listing.

The conflict between trade and conservation is nothing new, but it is common knowledge that once trade in wildlife runs rampant, soon there will be nothing left to harvest or sell. This is precisely what CITES was set up to prevent. Initially CITES worked well. Conservation NGOs brought scientists who presented data to governments' delegates and species were accorded appropriate consideration for protection by being placed on CITES Appendices.



Lesley Rochat's film was screened at CITES and delegations received DVDs of the film.



Palau co-sponsored the shark proposals. Pictured are Palau delegation members (right to left): Harry Fritz, Minister of Natural Resources, Environment & Tourism; and Fernando Sengebau, Director of the Bureau of Agriculture.

Japan, by its manipulation of CITES and other treaty organizations like the IWC, continues to raid the oceans' resources at an accelerating pace. "CITES is being used by Japan to legally loot the resources of the rest of the world," said SRI Executive director Marie Levine. "Especially vulnerable to such economic pressure are third-world countries who, desperate for immediate financial aid due to their diminishing natural resources, sell their future for what remains of these resources."

"The ecological and economic consequences of an ocean without sharks is staggering," wrote Edward Dorson, SRI's Director of Conservation Strategies in his editorial, 'A Resounding Cry for Reason is Vital at CITES', which appeared in the March 21, 2010 edition of the Gulf Times before the voting on shark species commenced. "As the ocean is the very engine that runs the systems that maintain all life,

this hidden holocaust will ultimately critically impact life on land as well."

What can be learned from this catastrophe? Certainly one of the most obvious lessons is that governments, which currently fund fisheries departments, must now also create and fund marine conservation departments and give them an equal voice in management of marine resources on all levels. Protective regional and national legislation — with teeth — needs to be promptly enacted and enforced.

All stakeholders who earn profits from the sea — sport and commercial fishermen; boating, surfing and diving manufacturers and operators; the media and all marine-related travel industries — need to contribute significantly more to the ocean's protection.

SRI, IFAW, IUCN, TRAFFIC, Shark Alliance, SSN, Pew and Oceania fought side-by-side as marine life advocates, but their combined resources proved inadequate opposition against the vote-purchasing power of Japan. Quite contrary to the myth that most NGOs are rolling in donation money, only governments and huge corporative cartels can play the vote-buying game. The capacity and essential purpose of NGOs like SRI is to inject science and reason into decisions that will effect the future of both species and economies.

Japan's counterparts in the vote buying or swapping department that were also advancing CITES protections, such as the USA and the EU, obviously weren't nearly as aggressive as Japan. In addition, the tepid promotion of its proposals and the lack of engagement by the US government's delegation with their NGOs' expertise was a new and unfortunate development at CITES CoP15.

These are only a few of the issues to be considered and developed before CITES CoP16 two and a half years from now. It can no longer be a handful of underfunded conservation NGOs battling to save the ocean. We are all engaged in a war to save the ocean, the very life support system of our planet and thereby the future of humanity.

The decisions made at CoP15 were a clear signal that the upcoming International Whaling Commission (IWC) meeting in Morocco this June may be equally disastrous for whales. The same relentless vote buying that Japan deployed at CITES is being used to decide the fate of the world's whales: A recent intersessional IWC meeting has formed a working plan to resume commercial whaling. Nearly 25 years of conservation efforts may be swept away by Japan if former staunch allies of the whales, the USA, the EU, and New Zealand, capitulate as they have indicated they will. If commercial whaling is allowed to resume, all other aquatic species, particularly the imperiled sharks, will be even more vulnerable to plunder.

The Shark Research Institute considers this a critical issue and, along with other NGOs, we are moving forward with a full-bore campaign to help prevent any form of a resumption back to the tragedy of commercial whaling with the ramification of increased plunder of all other aquatic species.

White Sharks More Endangered Than Tigers

White sharks may be more endangered than tigers, with only a few thousand left in the world's oceans, according to a leading marine biologist.

The grim assessment indicates there has been a sharp decline in these apex predators. A recent survey suggests that the numbers of white sharks has fallen below 3,500 individuals, the number of tigers conservationists believe are left in the wild, reported Ronald O'Dor, a senior scientist at the Census of Marine Life, an international collaboration that is cataloguing all marine life.

The numbers of white sharks have plummeted by 90 percent in 20 years due to targeted and illegal fishing, entanglement in nets, and collisions with vessels.

The World Conservation Union (IUCN), which operates the red list of endangered species, lists white sharks as vulnerable but has no official estimate of their global population. The species is listed on CITES Appendix II, and on Appendix I of the Convention in Migratory Species (CMS).

In 2007, marine biologists at Dalhousie University in Canada analyzed records from fisheries and research vessels dating from the 1970s to 2005 and found evidence of a dramatic decline in shark populations. Tiger sharks and scalloped hammerheads had declined more than 97% since the mid-1980s, while numbers of smooth hammerheads and bull sharks fell 99% off the east coast of the USA.

In general, only 10% of a shark population consists of mature adults, the remaining 90% are juveniles. The survey suggests that there are only 350 adult white sharks remaining in the world.

White sharks are highly-migratory sharks, capable of traveling 12,000 miles in nine months. Stanford researchers discovered that California sharks migrated thousands of miles across the Pacific, while others swam from South Africa to Australia and back in nine months. They discovered the sharks spend most of their time in three areas of the Pacific: The North American shelf waters of California; the slope and offshore waters around Hawaii; and spent about 100 days each year an area called the "White Shark Café," located in the open ocean approximately halfway between the Baja Peninsula and the Hawaiian Islands.



People see a white shark on the South California coast — and the same shark hundreds of miles away. "We are now understanding that they are more mobile than we thought — and actually it's the same shark appearing in different places," said Dr. O'Dor at the American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting in San Diego. The same sharks were being counted over and over again.

"The Australians have now got a system where they put tags on white sharks and they have receivers on the beaches so when a great white comes into the bay the receiver automatically makes a cell phone call and tells the guy in charge to close the beach," added Dr. O'Dor. So we *can* co-exist with marine life," he added.

Sushi Restaurant Busted for Serving Whale

DNA evidence led to the bust, and subsequent closing, of The Hump, a sushi restaurant in Santa Monica, for serving sei whale meat. Ocean Preservation Society (OPS) members ordered the \$600 chef's choice plate at The Hump, surreptitiously bagged samples and sent them to conservation geneticist Scott Baker who turned over his results to NOAA. Federal prosecutors charged The Hump's chef and parent company with the illegal sale of a marine animal - an offence that carries a penalty of up to one year in prison and a fine of up to \$200,000 for the restaurant. Ten days later, The Hump closed its doors. Louie Psihoyos, executive director of OPS, suspects that The Hump is not the only restaurant peddling whale. After the filing of charges, he says, "there was probably whale meat in dumpsters all up and down the coast."

Japan's Imperialism Upon the Seas

The outcomes of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) meeting in Doha, Qatar (as described in our lead article) and the recent International Whaling Commission intersessional meeting in Florida (which refined the Japanese-led plan to end the moratorium on commercial whaling), have fully revealed Japan's overall strategy when it comes to exploiting all marine species.

Japan is gutting the world's fish stocks while undermining every marine regulatory convention that may affect its ability to bully its way to plunder the world's oceans -- systematically rolling back years of international conventions and marine protection.

In order to foresee the fate of whales in the next decade or so, look no further than how all the marine species fared at CITES: Each and every proposed marine species were denied protections of any kind. This wasn't a random outcome; it was a Japanese orchestrated victory to further their imperialist activity on the seas. It has taken a suicidal path that leads to a horrific destination; an ecological plunge that will destroy our oceans for thousands of years.

Why commence a campaign for whales as the Shark Research Institute? Cetaceans are highly sentient beings, and, despite what Japan wants to project, whales aren't universally perceived as a "product." From elaborate scientific study to casual observation, they've proven to be extremely social, highly intelligent, communicative, and able to feel intense emotion. Japan realizes that if the killing of iconic species such as whales is sanctioned, the remainder of what's left of aquatic life will be theirs for the taking. And that's where the real profit is — i.e. taking the lucrative tunas for sushi and the sharks for their valuable fins.

Preventing the plan to remove the moratorium on commercial whaling is not just for the sake of the whales as sentient beings, but also to have a highly recognizable boundary to our hubris and greed in the taking of the less "cuddly" species such as the sharks.

If nothing is off-limits to Japan's willingness to dominate or destroy, then they will keep taking until nothing is left. This excessive plunder has happened to the whales before and a mass extinction event is now happening to the world's fish stocks -- with sharks under the most relentless attack.

If mankind is going to survive and enjoy the gifts that nature offers, we must recognize that no nation or cartel of nations should dominate the oceans and deplete its bounty at the expense of the future. Experience and knowledge are there to reveal the boundaries of sustainability and sanity. We must now realize that this threshold has been breached by Japan and their war upon the ocean *must* be stopped.

Edward Dorson, SRI Director of Conservation Strategies



A Campaign to Prevent the Resumption of Commercial Whaling

"Allowing Japan to Continue Commercial Whaling is Unacceptable" -- Barack Obama, March 16, 2008

This campaign's subtitle reflects back to Barack Obama's own promise: "As president, I will ensure that the U.S. provides leadership in enforcing international wildlife protection agreements, including strengthening the international moratorium on commercial whaling. Allowing Japan to continue commercial whaling is unacceptable." -- then-Senator Barack Obama.

President Obama is now drastically veering away from this campaign pledge. During March, a proposal was plotted out at an intersessional meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) that would reinstate commercial whaling if passed at the next IWC meeting this June.

Incredibly, the Obama administration is giving the proposal its full support and urging other nations to follow.

This US appeasement to Japan's ambitions to resume commercial whaling is based on Japanese leverage over our debt obligations, and an ecologically reckless gesture to satisfy whaling quotas for the Inuits in Alaska.

Furthermore, the plan is riddled with short-term compromises and ignores science completely. It has no enforcement, it cannot hold the whaling states to any promises, and it obviously undoes all the IWC conservation measures made since the 1986 declaration of a whaling moratorium.

In this instance, the Shark Research Institute won't redirect people to some other organization's "one-click" petition. The White House receives an average of 40,000 emails every day. We must ask for a bit more effort to be effective.

We ask that all concerned people take a few minutes to express their personal dissent by sending in actual letters by both mail and by fax to achieve maximum impact.

1. Get informed:

"Whaling: The Great Betrayal"

<http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/nature/whaling-the-great-betrayal-1925387.html>

Details of March 4th IWC intersessional meeting in Florida:

http://www.wdcs.org/submissions_bin/WDCS_IWC_Concerns_March2010.0.pdf

"Given All We Know of Whales, Why Resume the Slaughter?"

<http://tursiops.org/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=9476>

2. Write and fax President Obama:

Points are given on the next page to assist in writing your letter of protest. Letters can be sent to:

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500
Fax: (202) 456-2461

3. Write/fax and call your US Representatives and Senators:

The Capitol switchboard is (202) 456-1414

4. Boycott Japan: Email the Japanese Prime Minister, Yukio Hatoyama, and tell him you will not purchase any Japanese products or visit Japan until they stop their killing and capturing of dolphins and their slaughter of whales:

https://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/forms/comment_ssl.html

Campaign Letter Points To be Addressed to President Obama – *Below are points that you can use in your letter to say what the whale sell out means to you. Customized letters are accorded much more respect than obviously cloned form letters. As such, the potential for your making a difference with your letter will be magnified significantly.*

- Request that he honor his campaign promise to never resume commercial whaling if elected, wherein he stated on March 16, 2008: "As president, I will ensure that the US provides leadership in enforcing international wildlife protection agreements, including strengthening the international moratorium on commercial whaling. Allowing Japan to continue commercial whaling is unacceptable."
- In a drastic departure away from this pledge, a US-backed plan was advanced at the March intersessional meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) that would reinstate commercial whaling if passed at the next IWC meeting. As written, Japan, Iceland, and Norway will be able to resume what the president characterized as "unacceptable" commercial whaling.
- This plan would sanction killing of whales in the Southern Ocean Sanctuary in Antarctica and in the North Pacific; perpetuated with the discredited ruse of Japan's lethal "scientific research" whaling.
- The IWC intersessional's proposal has tinkered its wording to avoid a direct depiction of a return to commercial whaling, yet the result of the proposal would be just that. One glaring example of complicity with Japan's agenda is the word change from "Aboriginal" to "Indigenous" whaling. This switch in language not only addresses Alaskan Inuits and Greenlanders and their quotas on threatened whales, but it also assisted a Japanese ploy, wherein "Indigenous" would also apply to all of Japan's coastal whalers to increase the unsustainable plunder of whales in the North Pacific.
- The president stated that he would "ensure that the US provides leadership in enforcing international wildlife protection agreements." This unfulfilled pledge can be remedied once he compels Japan to actually honor all the agreements it has broken with impunity. Japan has violated the Law of the Sea Convention, the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).
- As the president promised to enforce these agreements, Japan's breaking of these accords should be challenged by the US in the International Court of Justice, through the dispute resolution procedures of the Law of the Sea Convention, and with the conciliation procedures of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- Request that the president, along with your Senators and Congressmen, deploy the powers of the Pelly Amendment to seek redress from the rogue whaling nations by having the US use its sanctioning powers against Japan, Norway, and Iceland until they stop whaling.
(<http://www.animallaw.info/statutes/stus22usc1978.htm>)
- In fulfilling his promise of "strengthening the international moratorium on commercial whaling" the president should give his support to S.3116; the International Whale Conservation and Protection Act of 2010.
- Urge your Senators and Representative in Congress to vigorously push the International Whale Conservation and Protection Act of 2010 into law.
- The US has become a beacon for whale conservation with the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act. Over 75% of Americans oppose the barbaric practice of whaling. As such, it is vital that the actions of the US insure these protections.
- Whales have proven to be extremely social, highly intelligent, communicative, and able to feel intense emotion. It has been empirically shown that the cetaceans are highly sentient beings and are not some "product" to be bartered or compromised.
- A person *must* be their word. Obama must honor his pledge to protect the whales -- he must not act to insure their demise.

Mafia Island Whale Shark Research Project Update



WS-0846, one of the sharks tagged in 2007, was seen several times off Mafia this season

Matthew D. Potenski, SRI's Director of Field Operations and research assistant Bryan Becker continued research at Mafia Island, Tanzania for a period of six weeks during February-March 2010. This was the fourth year of a focused research project on an aggregation of whale sharks at Mafia Island. More than 70 individual sharks have been photographed, tagged and cataloged in the waters around Mafia Island by Matt in the past three years.

Mafia Island is one of three major offshore islands, the others being Pemba and Zanzibar. It is the southernmost of these three islands, and is located east of the Rufiji River delta. Whale sharks can be found around Mafia during all

twelve months of the year, but there is a distinct high season from December through March. During these months, the sharks aggregate in larger numbers and come in much closer to the island.

The research objectives for this year were to continue to photograph whale sharks (for spot-pattern identification), collect DNA samples, and recover, download, and redeploy hydrophone receiver units. Data on every shark encountered was recorded, including size, sex, and tag number if a previously ID-tagged shark.

The whale shark research on Mafia Island has been conducted in partnership with the World Wide Fund for Nature – Tanzania Program Office (WWF-TPO). WWF has a small house on the island for visiting researchers. Matthew and Bryan stayed in the house in Utende village. While this was helpful, it also presented a challenge. In past years, WWF provided transport from Utende to the harbor at Kilindoni on the other side of the island. This year, all the local agents of WWF live on the Kilindoni side. To get to the harbor, Matt and Bryan purchased bicycles, and pedaled the ten unpaved miles across the island twice a day. There is nothing like an hour on a bicycle to warm you up for swimming after whale sharks.

During this field season, 23 days of observations were completed and 81 whale shark encounters were recorded. Whale sharks were seen on 21 of the 23 days of observation. This year, a large number of small sharks observed. Some 27 of the recorded encounters were with sharks of less than four metres; the smallest sharks observed were approximately two metres (six feet) in length. The recording of many small whale sharks may indicate recruitment of new individuals to the population.

Another notable finding was that only male sharks were observed this year — the first time in four years that not a single female has been seen during the study period. Finally, there were many individuals who were observed for their second or third season at Mafia Island, and two individuals who have been observed all four years of the study. One shark, which has a distinctive horizontal cut in its first dorsal fin has been easy to identify each season. This shark, one of the eight sharks fitted with a satellite tag in 2007, was observed for most of the period the researchers were at Mafia Island.

DNA samples from 11 individuals were secured, preserved and sent to Dr. Jennifer Schmidt, the principal investigator for SRI's whale shark genetics study. She has added genetic profiles of Tanzanian sharks to a database of samples from other areas of the world. These are the first Tanzanian genetic samples obtained and it will be interesting to learn how the Tanzanian samples compare with those of other areas, specifically the samples from the East Africa region such as the Seychelles.

Finally, an acoustic telemetry study of the whale sharks in Mafia Island was initiated last year. Eight whale sharks were fitted with acoustic transmitters. Two hydrophone receiver units were deployed on the seabed

near Mafia Island to record when the tagged sharks enter the area. The research team retrieved the units, downloaded the data, and redeployed the units. Data indicates all eight sharks are still coming into the area, and the number of hits from tagged sharks exceeded expectations. The acoustic telemetry can prove a more accurate measure of whale shark abundance than visual surveys, as they continuously collect data and are not subject to missing sharks due to weather constraints, during the night, or if the sharks are at depth. One of the acoustic-tagged sharks was observed on several occasions. This shark, number 0843, was originally tagged in 2007, and an acoustic tag was attached in March 2009. Shark number 0843 is known as Aiden, in memoriam of R. Aiden Martin, the former SRI International Director for Canada.

Along with data collection, Matt and Bryan also held meetings with many of the influential people on Mafia Island to discuss the whale shark research and ecotourism activities. They met with the Mafia Island District Commissioner, the Honorable Manzie Mangochie, the Mafia District Executive Director, William Shimwela, the Mafia Marine Park Warden in Charge, George Msumi, Dr. Jean de Villiers, Executive Director of the Mafia Island Whale Shark Conservation Society (WHASCOS), as well as management from Butiama Beach resort, Chole Mjini Lodge, Frontier Expeditions, Mafia Island Lodge, Pole Pole Lodge, Shamba Kilolo lodge, and Whale Shark lodge. The research team would like to say *asante sana* (Kiswahili for 'thank you very much') to all the groups on Mafia that assisted in their research efforts.

Overall, the expedition was a success. Matt is proposing a new research project to be completed over the next three to four years at Mafia Island. This expedition was important to maintain continuity in the data set and monitoring the population that utilizes Mafia Island.

It is also evident that ecotourism activities at Mafia Island is rapidly increasing. On several days there were a number of boats at sea, and while SRI has proposed a "code of conduct" to be followed by whale shark tour operators, strict adherence to the code will take some additional work. Dedicated whale shark tourism is also increasing, as discussions with most of the lodges have pointed towards people visiting Mafia specifically to see whale sharks.

The continued presence of SRI as a source of research data and education will benefit both the local residents of Mafia Island and the whale sharks that use the area. New research will help to allow us to better understand why the whale sharks are using Mafia Island waters and how we can further develop ecotourism activities at Mafia Island, without detriment to the whale sharks.



Bryan Becker and whale shark



Thank You to Our Supporters!

We are very grateful for the continued support of:

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- The Wave Foundation
- World Wildlife Fund
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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

Donsol, Philippines with Dr. Jennifer V. Schmidt: April 26-31, 2010, \$1100 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 other dates, contact HQ.

Multiple Species

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).

Palau with Dean Fessler: September 2-11, 2010, \$2,000 per diver.

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

Mercury Found in Supermarket Fish

A recent undercover investigation by GotMercury.org detected hazardous levels of mercury in fresh and frozen fish from 13 San Francisco Bay Area supermarkets. All swordfish exceeded the U.S. government's methylmercury limits and one was double the FDA mercury limit. Eating fish such as swordfish, tuna and sharks is the number one source of methylmercury exposure in the United States, according to the EPA. Methylmercury exposure can result to developmental and learning disorders, memory and vision loss, and death. Women of childbearing age and children are at greatest risk.

Mark your Calendars

- **June 6-11, 2010:** Sharks International, a one-time conference in Cairns, Australia. www.sharksinternational.org
- **August 25-29, 2010:** Blue, a Film Festival and Ocean Summit, at the Monterey Aquarium, CA. www.blueoceanfilmfestival.org