

Shark Research Institute Member Newsletter



Shark Research Institute Global Headquarters

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Matthew McDavitt wins Benchley Award



Wendy Benchley, Matthew McDavitt & Stan Waterman

The Shark Research Institute created the Peter Benchley Shark Conservation Awards to honor the memory of the late Peter Benchley, and spotlight those who are working internationally to protect sharks as valuable ocean resources. The first of the 2008 Peter Benchley Shark Conservation Awards, sponsored by Rolex, was presented by SRI President Stan Waterman and Wendy Benchley to Matthew T. McDavitt on March 29 at an Award Ceremony hosted by *Beneath The Sea* (www.beneaththesea.org). The ceremony was attended by celebrities and marine conservationists from around the world including Dr. Sylvia Earle, National Geographic photographer David Doubilet, and marine artist Wyland

Sawfish fins are among the most valuable in the shark fin trade. In US waters, these rays once ranged from New York to Texas. Critically endangered, their numbers have declined by 99%; today they are only found in a few marine reserves in Florida. For more than a decade Matthew, an estate lawyer from Virginia, worked on his own to gather data on the international sawfish trade. In 2006, his

data convinced eBay to prohibit sales of small-tooth sawfish rostra on their website. In 2007, his comprehensive fully-referenced 40-page overview of the trade enabled the USA to successfully propose sawfishes for protection at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), making them the first elasmobranch fishes (and the only Family of elasmobranchs) listed on CITES Appendix I.

The Peter Benchley Shark Conservation Award for Media will be presented in June in Manila, Philippines at *Celebrate the Sea*, the largest Imagery festival in the Asia Pacific region. The festival, which runs from June 13 to 15, will be attended by marine photographers and filmmakers from around the world, and Gloria Arroyo, President of the Philippine Republic.

"Peter Benchley was much more than the Shark Research Institute's benefactor, a colleague and friend, he was an eloquent advocate for shark conservation," says Stan Waterman. In the 1970s, Benchley's fictional best-seller, "Jaws" — which Spielberg made into a blockbuster movie — generated a fear of sharks simply because so little was known about them. By the 1980s, that fear had given away to curiosity, resulting in an unprecedented amount of research on sharks. "When sharks became target species for Asian markets in the 1990s, scientific data were available to combat threats to sharks — data which existed due to the fascination in sharks that Peter had generated," said Captain Stephen D. Nagiewicz, Chair of the Shark Research Institute Board of Trustees.



SRI Patron Sylvia Earle congratulates Matthew

NOAA's Fisheries Service has outlined new measures to prevent overfishing and rebuild the number of sandbar and other shark species. The public may comment on the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) until May 19. The measures include revised quotas and a ban on cutting fins off before landing a shark. A final rule is expected to be published in June and implemented 30 days later.

Recent stock assessments indicate that sandbar, porbeagle, and dusky sharks are severely overfished and drastic measures need to be taken to begin rebuilding populations. It has been illegal to catch dusky sharks since 2000, but these sharks are taken incidentally as fishers seek other species.

Sandbar sharks make up the majority of the current commercial shark landings and are prized for their fins, the main ingredient in dishes such as shark fin soup. The final environmental impact statement isolates the management of the sandbar shark from other species managed in the large coastal shark complex. The FEIS will cut the sandbar shark quota from 1,017 metric tons to 87.9 metric tons, an 85 percent reduction, per year from 2008 to 2012 and cuts the quota for porbeagle sharks.

In addition, all fishing for sandbar sharks will take place as part of a research fishery with approximately 10 commercial fishing vessels participating per year. The sandbar research will be designed to gain more information on shark life history, techniques to reduce bycatch, and to ensure sufficient data for future stock assessments. The final environmental impact statement would still allow fishing for other large coastal sharks with reduced limits on numbers of sharks taken per trip consistent with recent stock assessments.

NOAA is also modifying the list of shark species that recreational fishermen can retain, necessary to rebuild the various stocks.

Another important measure in the final environmental impact statement would require that all sharks be landed at the dock with their fins attached. This regulation is designed to improve enforcement against shark finning. The regulation would also assist with identification of the species and improve species-specific data collection for future stock assessments. The commercial quota for porbeagle sharks, another depleted species,

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, but 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 3–7, 2008 Expedition Leader, Paul Anes. \$1,500 per person

Tanzania & Northern Mozambique Channel, aboard the oceanographic vessel *Kairos*. December 2008-March 2009 Expedition leader, Matt Potenski. Ten day segments \$4,496 (\$3,000 for SRI members if reservations made thru SRI).

White Sharks

Guadalupe Island: 5 day - August 21-25, September 4-8; 10-14 or 16-20; September 30-October 4; October 6-10, 12-16 or 18-22; November 1-5. \$2,750 per diver.

Guadalupe Island: 7 day — August 27 to September 2; September 22-28; October 24-30, \$3,150 per diver.

Guadalupe Island with Amos Nachoum & Alex Antoniou — September 1-8; \$3,950 per diver

Sandtiger Sharks

Morehead City, North Carolina with Dean Fessler June 28-29, \$550 per diver includes boat & accommodations.

will be reduced from 92 metric tons a year to 1.7 metric tons per year. Recreational anglers would also be allowed to land porbeagle sharks, and porbeagle sharks could be landed in tournaments.

The final environmental impact statement contains other regulations designed to prevent overfishing of several shark species and can be viewed at <http://www.nmfs.noass.gov/sfa/hms/>. A final rule is expected to be published in June.

Comments on the FEIS may be submitted to:

Michael Clark, Highly Migratory Species Management Division NOAA's Fisheries Service - F/SF1, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring MD 20910.

E-mail: shark.finalEIS@noaa.gov (please include in subject line the following identifier: Amendment 2 FEIS), or fax to 301-713-1917.

SRI Fundraiser

It is unlikely we see any sharks, but this event promises to be just plain fun!

The day, May 31st, starts with a morning one-tank dive on the 50-foot dive boat *John Jack*. The boat is docked at 407 Channel Drive, Point Pleasant Beach, NJ.



www.captainzero.com/home.html

We will cast off at 10 am. and brunch will be served onboard.. At 1 pm Dean Fessler will present a seminar on sharks at the historic Marconi Hotel in the Info Age Science Center, 2201 Marconi Road, Wall, NJ. (www.infoage.org)

This is an opportunity for SRI members in the tri-state area to get together and “talk shark”, plus the event will raise funds for our educational and conservation programs.

Cost: \$85 per diver (includes seminar), or \$15 for seminar only, \$7.50 for children 12 & under. To make a reservation call SRI HQ at 609-921-3522 or email: marie@sharks.org.

Thank You to our Supporters!

We are very grateful for the support of:

- The Adikes Family Foundation
- Adventure Aquarium
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- San Diego Shark Diving
- Greg Sparks
- Underwater Video Images
- Wave Foundation
- World Wildlife Fund

Beulah Davis 1930-2008

Beulah Davis, 77, a zoologist and the first Director of the Natal Sharks Board (NSB), passed away recently after a short illness. Initially known as the Natal Anti-Shark Measures Board, NSB was an advisory service in South Africa which assisted the tourist industry and local authorities in reducing injuries to beach goers from sharks during the period that shore-based whaling stations were operational. This was achieved through the widespread introduction of shark nets along the coast in the mid 1960s, and supplemented by drumlines in 2007. When whaling ceased in 1976, NSB staff took over the servicing and maintenance of the nets from the contractors and municipal employees. Through her powers of persuasion, Beulah, secured the current land and buildings occupied by the NSB, overlooking the Indian Ocean.

The nets also served as biological monitoring tools; much of the knowledge about sharks in the southwest Indian Ocean was gathered by the NSB shark netting program because each shark caught was sized and sexed. The operation, which is in effect a shark fishery, is one of the few long term indices of abundance and decline of large sharks in coastal waters of the region.

Beulah retired in 1990, which enabled her to spend more time with her two daughters, Gaye and Rose, and her grandchildren.

Sharkwater DVD now available

In this award-winning film, SRI Board member Rob Stewart debunks historical stereotypes and media depictions of sharks as bloodthirsty, man-eating monsters and reveals the reality of sharks as pillars in the evolution of the seas.

Filmed in visually stunning, high definition video, *Sharkwater* takes you into the most shark-rich waters of the world, exposing the exploitation and corruption surrounding the world's shark populations in the marine reserves of Cocos Island, Costa Rica and the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador.

Available through Shark Shoppe at www.sharks.org



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WE'RE ON THE WEB
WWW.SHARKS.ORG

Westchester Petition

Your help is needed! Westchester County in New York is hoping to adopt legislation to ban sales of shark fin soup in that county. This would establish a very important precedent and may lead to other jurisdictions taking similar action. SRI asks that members send letters of support for this initiative to the following address:

Legislator Thomas J. Abinanti, Chair
Environment & Energy Committee
County of Westchester, Board of Legislators
148 Martine Avenue
White Plains, NY 10601
Fax: 1-914-995-3884

Please support Sherman & Sharks!

Artist Jim Toomey has created a campaign to show NMFS that the public cares about sharks. Please copy or cut out the cartoon below and mail it to Dr. Balsinger to participate in this important public awareness effort.

WEAR IT TO SHOW YOU CARE

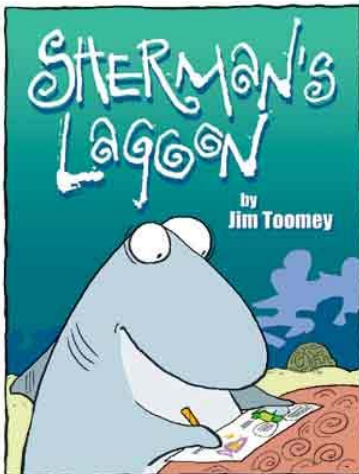
Every person that signed one of our 'No Finning' notes at *Beneath The Sea* last month received a 'No Finning' sticker.



Thousands of people signed the notes which were sent to Alibaba.com and the stickers were so popular that we've put the design on T-shirts, mousepads, mugs and many other items in the Shark Shoppe on our website.

Update on the March 2008 Donsol Expedition

Last month SRI researchers on the expedition to Donsol, Philippines, interacted with 23 whale sharks on the first two days alone and created a template for community-based ecotourism.. Another expedition is being scheduled for April 2009. Watch the website for details.



MANY KINDS OF SHARKS HAVE BEEN OVERFISHED TO THE EDGE OF EXTINCTION AROUND THE WORLD, AND WE NEED TO ACT QUICKLY TO SAVE WHAT'S LEFT OF THEM. LIKE LIONS AND TIGERS AND BEARS, THEY ARE BEAUTIFUL PREDATORS AND A VITAL PART OF NATURE.

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO DO, IF YOU WANT TO HELP. IN THE SPACE ON THE RIGHT, DRAW YOUR FAVORITE SHARK... A GREAT WHITE OR A HAMMERHEAD OR WHATEVER. THEN CLIP THIS CARTOON OUT AND MAIL TO:

Dr. James Balsiger, Director
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Hwy
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Dr. Balsiger,
With your leadership, the United States can continue to play a pivotal role in establishing international catch limits for sharks. Please do the right thing.

Sincerely, _____
Name _____

www.shermanslagoon.com