

Shark Research Institute Newsletter



**Shark Research Institute Global Headquarters
P.O. Box 40, Princeton, New Jersey 08540, USA**

Update on the Whale Shark Slaughter in India



In November, SRI Executive Director, Marie Levine, traveled to India to meet with conservation organizations and individuals working to end the slaughter of whale sharks in that country and assess the possibilities for development of whale

shark-based ecotourism. She met with divers in Goa, then visited the Lackshadweep Islands off the southwestern coast of India, and the Andaman Islands off the southeastern coast. Both island groups offer superb diving, although whale shark sightings are rare. Commander Arun Patil, Director of the National Institute of Watersports working with the Ministry of Tourism and Government of India, coordinated the trip.

One of the highlights of the visit was a strategy-planning session in Mumbai, organized and hosted by Prahlad Kakar, author, television producer, owner of India's largest scuba training center and dive resort operator. The meeting brought together conservation groups, fishing interests and the media. Mike Pandey screened his documentary film *Shores of Silence – Whale Sharks of India*, and discussions followed. It was decided that the most expedient means of ending the massacre is development of whale shark-based ecotourism. Unlike many other countries with subtropical and tropical shores, there are still comparatively few sport divers in India. However, the local population base is enormous and swimmers can safely interact with whale sharks. And so, in the coming months, a series of television commercials

using footage supplied by SRI and Mike Pandey, will be produced by Prahlad's company and aired throughout India. During the upcoming killing season, SRI will charter fishing boats for ecotourism – as many as we can afford. On site observers will remain in Veraval during the entire six-week season to pay the crews we've chartered and make certain that none of them participate in the hunt. The fishermen are reluctant to kill the sharks and our strategy is to prove to them that there exists a financially lucrative and far less dangerous alternative. Each boat that is chartered for ecotourism will cost up to \$15,000 for the duration of the season. Every boat chartered may prevent the slaughter of 30 whale sharks or more. Sport Diver Magazine has offered to support this initiative, and more sponsors for boats are needed.

New Aircraft for Baja Field Station

Thanks to the generosity of SRI members Marc and Mary Fougner, our Baja Field Station will soon take delivery of a new \$22,000.00 microlight. The aircraft, built by the Ultralight Aircraft Corp. in Moline, IL will be delivered in January 2001 and will be used to spot whale sharks in the Bay of La Paz. The plane is similar to the one in these photos.



We are eager to start aerial surveys. Thank you Marc and Mary!!

Global Shark Attack File

SRI maintains the GSAF as a resource for researchers, physicians and the media who require accurate data about these incidents

- **AUSTRALIA** December 3, 2000, at 09h30, a spearfisherman, 38, was bitten by a 2.5-metre shark at Sykes Reef on the Great Barrier Reef. The shark, thought to be a bronze whaler, was apparently trying to take the speared fish, but bit the man's left forearm and elbow instead. On November 6, Ken Crew, 49, was fatally injured by a white shark in shallow water 25-metres from shore at Perth's Cottesloe Beach in Western Australia. At 07h30 on September 24, Cameron Bayes, a tourist from New Zealand, was killed by a five-metre white shark while surfing 50 metres from shore at Cactus Beach in South Australia. This was the second incident at Cactus Beach this year; another man, Anthony Hayes was bitten by a three-metre shark there in February. On September 25, a local surfer, 17, was killed by a white shark off Blacks Point, South Australia.
- **OKINAWA** On September 9, a 2.5-m white shark was thought to be involved when a surfer, 31, was fatally bitten 30 metres from shore off Miyako Island. This was the first incident off the island in more than four years; on July 23, 1996, Moriyoshi Takehara, 52, was conducting a coral survey when he was killed by a five-metre shark. Tooth fragments recovered from Mr. Takehara's wounds confirmed that a white shark was involved.
- **TANZANIA** This year five people were killed by sharks at Coco Beach, Dar-es-Salaam. The most recent victim was Godfrey Msemwa, 28. It is believed that Zambesi sharks, *Carcharhinus leucas*, were involved in the attacks.
- **FLORIDA** On November 18, it was reported that a shark lacerated the right calf of swimmer Colin Shadforth at Bonita Beach on Florida's gulf coast. The incident took place in murky water and may have involved a 4' to 5' sharpnose or blacktip shark. On October 20 at 18h00, Jason Licamele, 23, was surfing just north of Fort Pierce Inlet State Park in Florida when a shark bit his leg. The surfer was treated at Lawnwood Regional Medical Center and released. In September, another surfer was bitten on the ankle by a shark at dusk near the Fort Pierce Inlet. On October 17 at 15h30, Norman Payne, 69, was swimming 100 to 150 metres from shore at South Beach, when his right hand was bitten by a shark. On October 9, Matt Kraskiewicz was surfing near Lake Worth Inlet in West Palm Beach when a shark, apparently following a school of baitfish, bit the teen's left foot. On October 5, two people were bitten by sharks at New Smyrna beach: at 13h00 Taylor Holley, 11, was body-surfing in waist-deep water amid a school of fish when he was bitten twice on the right heel; two hours later and a mile to the north, Austin White, 23, was surfing when his hand was bitten. September 11 at 13h20, Jason Armstrong, 25, was in waist-deep water at Daytona Beach Shores, when a shark bit two fingers of his right hand. It was speculated that in the turbulent water the shark mistook the swimmer's fingers for baitfish.
- **NORTH CAROLINA** On October 3, it was reported that Mark Taylor was surfing off Wrightsville Beach at 16h30 when his upper left arm was bitten by a shark. At 16h30 on July 6, Ashley Walker, 12, was playing in the surf at Currituck on the Outer Banks when her calf was bitten by a shark. It was believed a tiger shark, following shoals of fish close to shore, was involved in the incident. The girl was expected to make a complete recovery. The following week two surfers were bitten off Wrightsville and Holden beaches. It was believed that the Gulf Stream may have forced schools of fish close to shore, the sharks followed the fish inshore, and came into contact with the surfers.

SRI NOTES

U.S. Congress Acts to End Shark Finning

Finning, slicing off a living shark's fins and discarding its carcass, may soon be outlawed in U.S. waters. After a two-year fight to protect shark

populations, the US Senate passed legislation to prohibit shark finning in U.S. waters. The U.S. House of Representative passed the same legislation in November. The bill will now be sent to the President to be signed into law. The legislation will make it illegal for a fishing vessel carrying shark fins without the carcasses to enter an American port or operate within the 200-mile U.S. federal waters. The legislation is aimed primarily at the Pacific Ocean fishery; in 1998 alone the number of sharks finned in Hawaii waters topped 60,000. Sharks are especially vulnerable to overfishing because they mature slowly and produce small litters. The bill also provides for a study of shark stocks, including the identifying of fishing gear and practices to minimize incidental catches of sharks.

Update on SRI Satellite Tagging Study

The satellite tag that was deployed on July 6, 2000 successfully detached itself from the whale shark right on schedule on October 1, 2000 and archived data were transmitted to SRI via the Argos satellite system. Data indicates that the animal did not venture far from the coast of Honduras, but made repeated deep dives. The lowest temperature recorded was 12° C, or 53.6° F.

Our special thanks to Microwave Telemetry for donating the tag.

SRI receives continued support

SRI thanks the following sponsors for their continued support:

- **Amphibico, Inc**
- **Berger Bros. Camera & Video Exchange**
- **Draeger DiveAmerica**
- **Eastman Kodak Company**
- **JBL Enterprises Inc.**
- **PADI, Project AWARE Foundation**
- **Microwave Telemetry, Inc.**

SRI Field Expeditions - 2001

Utila, Bay Islands Honduras

April 7 - 14

July 7 - 14

July 14 - 21

July 21 - 28

December 22 - 29

La Paz, BCS, Mexico

September 1 - 8

September 8 - 15

September 15 - 22

September 22 - 29

September 29 - October 6

Galapagos Islands, Ecuador

October 18 - 25

Cocos Island, Costa Rica

To Be Announced



Eco-tourist Mina Kuhn snorkels with a whale shark in Utila this past September (Photo by Lance Ehret)

*For More Information Call or Email
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Stan Waterman to Premiere Film in Texas *cont...*

include a trip with Stan aboard the Turks & Caicos Aggressor, a trip for two in Queensland, Australia (Cairns area) including diving, a Light & Motion Tetra housing, plus a variety of diving equipment. Stan's video series "The Ocean World" will be sold and he will be available to autograph posters. The auction will be followed by a luscious buffet dinner and the private screening of Stan's film.

Please reserve your seats by January 15. Each seat is \$45 and there are only a limited number of tickets available, sold on a first-come, first-served basis. Please mail or fax your order, with checks made payable to Island Time Scuba, to 914 Maplecrest Drive, Lancaster, TX 75146 or fax 972-227-7288.

This world premier event is being underwritten by Nai'a Cruises, The Dallas World Aquarium, Malaysia Airlines, Oz Dive and Underwater Video Images. We are still looking to our friends in the community and diving industry to donate items for the silent auction. If you or someone you know would like to contribute to this worthwhile event, please have them contact Nancy McGee at 972-227-6678 or nancy@islandtimescuba.com

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Award Winning Film

The whale shark massacre in India is the subject of Mike Pandey's award-winning film. *Shores of Silence – Whale Sharks in India* has won the Panda Award, aka "Green Oscar", at Wildscreen 2000. Pandey, who owns Riverbank Studios in New Delhi, garnered the Panda in 1994 with his production *The Last Elephant – Wild Elephant Capture in Sarguja*. For *Shores of Silence*, Pandey and his four-member team focus on the ecological disaster in north India. "Previous estimates of 1,200 whale sharks slaughtered this year were taken from a 20-km stretch of coast; the real number was closer to 6,000," says Pandey. The fishermen began slaughtering the giant sharks, according to Pandey, only after Indonesian fishing fleets operating close inshore along the Veraval coast decimated the local stocks of pomfret.

The film unflinchingly records the butchery of a living whale shark and scenes of the offshore hunt and capture of the giant sharks. Fishermen in small boats motor over to a whale shark and plunge their iron hooks into its body. Lives and limbs of the hunters are sometimes lost as the 30-ton creature sounds in a "panic plunge". "We used only hand-held cameras to capture the drama on the high seas to show what these men risk for a few hundred rupees," Pandey says. "What makes it more ironic is that the meat isn't even consumed in India. It is sold (for Re. 1 per kg or \$0.20 per lb.) and exported to Southeast Asia." The fishermen use the oil from the decomposed livers of the fish to waterproof their boats simply because it is available.

Stan Waterman to Premiere Film in Texas



Stan Waterman, President of SRI and five-time Emmy award winner, will premiere his new video production, "*The Macro World of Indonesia*" on Wednesday, February 7, 2001 at a dinner/video release hosted by Island Time Scuba at the Dallas World Aquarium. A pioneer underwater film producer with a career that spans nearly 50 years in the diving industry, Stan was co-director of underwater photography and second unit in the production of *The Deep*, and has been inducted into the International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame. The Discovery Channel recently broadcast a two-hour biographical special about Stan, called *The Man Who Loves Sharks*. (For more information visit www.stanwaterman.com)

The evening will begin with wine, beer, champagne and soft drinks in the aquarium section, where a silent auction to benefit SRI will take place. Items are still rolling in, and

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