

Shark Research Institute Newsletter



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

Galapagos Update



From October 19 - 25, 2001, an SRI team led by Dr. Alex Antoniou and Clifford Simoneau worked in the waters off Wolf and Darwin Islands. On October 21, they encountered two 35' whale sharks but were unable to approach close enough to tag them. The next day (October 22), they successfully deployed two archival pop-up tags equipped with temperature, depth and light sensors on two 35' female whale sharks. The first tag, programmed to detach after 12



days, indicated the shark's maximum diving depth during that period was 450'. The second tag is scheduled to detach itself from the host animal on March 1, 2001. A tissue sample for mtDNA analysis was recovered from the second shark and a visual tag was also attached.

The tagged shark was encountered by divers later the same day, as well as two other untagged sharks. The sharks interacted with the divers throughout the final dive of the day.

In 2002, the team will continue to work with whale sharks and study the population dynamics of three other species: scalloped hammerhead sharks, whitetip reef sharks and Galapagos sharks.

SRI Research Center - La Paz



SRI is embarking on a year round research program in the Sea of Cortez at its newly-built field station, courtesy of Club Cantamar.

SRI's microlight aircraft will be used to conduct aerial surveys of whale sharks and manta rays. The aircraft can also radio location of the animals to the research vessel. The field station has accommodations for staff, visiting scientists and/or student interns; indoor lab and office space; and an outdoor wet lab.

SRI thanks Fernando Aguilar, owner of Club Cantamar, for his generosity, and we are grateful for his continuing commitment to shark research and conservation.



Global Shark Attack File

On the morning of November 23, 2001, Roger Frankland, 49, was surfing 200 metres off Flat Rock Beach at Lennox Head, Australia, when a shark bit his board. The shark, thought to be a bronze whaler, struck the board with force and elevated it two to three metres above the surface, leaving an indentation and teeth marks in the fiberglass. The surfer was not injured.

SRI NOTES

SRI Seychelles

During 2001, the Marine Conservation Society Seychelles (incorporating the Shark Research Institute - Seychelles) was able to implement an expanded whale shark monitoring program partly funded by the Global Environment Facility of the World Bank. During the course of the season more than 30 sharks were tagged with visual identification markers and six satellite tags were deployed. A trial acoustic tracking project was also initiated. Data collection from the programs is ongoing and the program will be continued over the next two years.

David Rowat, SRI-Seychelles

SRI Canada

SRI Canada was formed in January 2001. Its Board of Directors are: Richard Martin, Chris Harvey-Clark, Jason Treburg, Ben Speers-Roesch, Jeffrey Gallant and Anne Martin. Despite its directors being busy with other commitments and scattered across the second-largest country in the world, SRI Canada has collected many materials for next year's launch of its official, bilingual website as well as set up several interesting research and education projects for 2002. These include an expedition to study the Greenland shark (*Somniosus microcephalus*) under the icecap on the St. Lawrence Estuary in February, and preparing a cross-Canada traveling shark exhibit featuring life-sized models, displays of shark specimens, artifacts and research equipment, still photos and video clips, and informative panels. Plans are also in the works to prepare a first-ever book on Canada's surprisingly rich shark fauna, designed as a companion-volume to the traveling exhibit. *Rick Martin, SRI-Canada*

CONSERVATION NEWS

THAILAND: Ten shark fins purchased in Bangkok's Chinatown were tested for mercury at the Thailand Institute of Scientific and Technological Research. Seven of the fins had mercury levels in excess of 0.05 milligrams of mercury per kilogram. Of these, one contained 21.01 mg/kg, 42 times the acceptable limit for human consumption. Additional testing by Thailand Food and Drug Administration (TFDA) resulted in a recommendation that pregnant women should not eat shark fin soup.



Despite the TFDA warnings, shark fin restaurants in

Bangkok's Chinatown are still offering shark fin dishes, SRI executive director Marie Levine surveyed shark fin restaurants and suppliers in Bangkok earlier this month. The restaurants appear to be thriving, promoting both shark fin dishes and bird's nest soup. The (comparatively fresh) fin in Scala Shark Fin Restaurant's window (shown left) is huge; the abalone



shells at the bottom of the fin are +10" in length indicating the fin belonged to whale shark or basking shark.

SOUTH AFRICA: Customs officers seized 8,000 kg of shark fins (worth R4 million) that were offloaded in East London from the *Shuen Kuoli*, a Taiwanese fishing vessel.

CONGO: The Congolese government has banned shark fishing in their territorial waters and imposed a ban on export of all shark products. The legislation results from the decline of shark in Pointe-Noire's Atlantic coast due to poaching.

AUSTRALIA:

The Australian government has declared their east coast populations of gray nurse sharks critically endangered and has called for "No Take" fishing zones in Queensland and New South Wales. Fishing for gray nurse sharks has been prohibited since 1984 and the shark has been listed as a threatened species since the early 1990s. This species has a low reproduction rate; a mature female gray nurse shark may produce one pup every two years. Scientific surveys have revealed that the population has continued to decline and it is thought that fewer than 500 of the sharks remain off Australia's east coast.

Symposiums

Shark Conference 2002

Shark Conference 2002 will be held May 13-16, 2002 in Taipei. The emphasis of the conference will be practical fisheries management, conservation of sharks and regional and international cooperation. Topics include shark fishery, stock assessment, utilization, fishery management, conservation and education, and threatened species. Deadline for papers and registration is February 28, 2002. For more information, contact Rachel Cavanagh at Rachel@naturebureau.com.uk or visit the website at <http://shark.fd.ntou.edu.tw>

Deep-Sea Elasmobranchs

I have been asked by Don MacKinlay to co-organize an international American Fisheries Society symposium on deep-sea elasmobranchs. An important function of this symposium is to allow researchers in this field to get together, share perspectives, and exchange ideas. I want to keep the scope of the conference as broad as possible, including (but not limited to): life history, functional morphology, physiology, systematics, bathymetry, zoogeography, behavioral ecology, diet, reproductive biology, captive biology, fisheries biology and management. The

proceedings are to be published. If you would be interested in participating in this symposium, please contact me at rmartin@direct.ca with your contact information and, if possible, a proposed presentation topic.

Rick Martin, Director SRI-Canada

BTS-2002

Beneath the Sea, the largest dive show on the east coast of the United States, will be held at the Meadowlands Convention Center on March 22, 23, 24, 2002. The show features 288 exhibitors, 57 seminars, 11 in-depth workshops, marine art gallery, National Underwater Photo Contest, Ocean Pals National Awards, International Underwater Film Festival, Women Divers Hall of Fame, more than \$15,000 in prizes and much more. For tickets, contact: <http://www.BeneathTheSea.org>



SRI Road Show

Want to learn more about SRI projects, field research or general shark biology and behavior? SRI's Education Department is available for slide and video presentations to school or dive club meetings in NY, NJ and PA. Please contact SRI Headquarters at 609-921-3522 to arrange a presentation.

SRI Receives Continued Support

SRI thanks the following sponsors for their continued support:

- **Goddard School**
- **JBL Enterprises Inc.**
- **PADI Foundation**
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- **Microwave Telemetry, Inc.**
- **C2 Educational Expeditions**

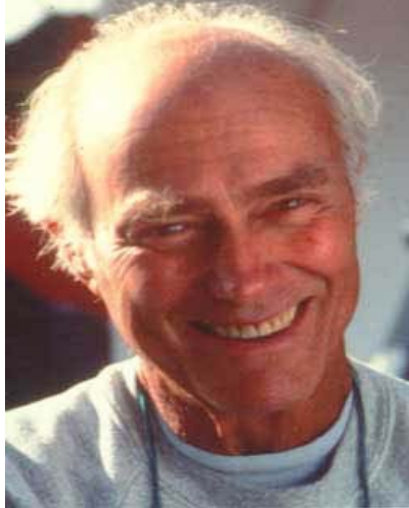
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Film Premiere to Benefit SRI



Stan Waterman, President of SRI, will premiere two new films, *Egypt and the Red Sea* and *Bali and the Dragons*, at the Dallas World Aquarium on January 26, 2002.

Tickets for this world film premiere event are available from Island Time Scuba

(www.islandtimescuba.com or telephone 872-227-6678). A silent auction featuring some terrific items and vacations will also be held during the evening, beginning at 7 p.m.

Tickets are \$55 per person for the dinner and presentation. The fundraiser is being underwritten by Island Time Scuba, Underwater Video Images, The Dallas World Aquarium, Nai'a, Tropicana Homes and the Scarlett Family.

Odyssey to the Coconut Isles

The January 2002 edition of *Dive Training Magazine* features an article by Jean Pierce titled Odyssey to the Coconut Isles, that details the journey by SRI director Marie Levine, Commander Arun Patil and the author through southern India in November 2000.

2002 Expeditions Scheduled

SRI field expeditions are now being set for 2002. Expeditions to LaPaz have already been scheduled and 24 weeks of field trips are planned. Also in the works are expeditions to Galapagos, India,



South Africa, Thailand and Utila. Weekend trips to North Carolina to study grey reef sharks

and to South Carolina to dive for megalodon teeth are being scheduled throughout the summer.

The LaPaz expedition schedule may be downloaded from our website at: <http://www.sharks.org> and the remaining schedules will be posted there in the coming weeks. Call 609-921-3522 or send an email to expeditions@sharks.org if you would prefer to receive the schedules via regular mail.

