



Shark Foundation Annual Report for 1998/1999

August 1999

The Shark Foundation ("Die Hai-Stiftung")

Sharks have been part of the ocean ecosystem for hundreds of millions of years and fulfill a vital control function. Today, many shark species are endangered, some are even on the brink of extinction! Sharks are killed to produce ineffective cartilage preparations, they are fished for their fins or meat, and millions die needlessly as bycatch in the nets of swimming fish factories.

In addition to the fishing industry, shark populations are strongly affected by the destruction of the natural coastal regions where they rear their young. Sharks have no lobby because they do not belong to the so-called "cuddly animals" such as seals or whales. On the contrary, people fear and hate sharks. The Shark Foundation is the lobby of the sharks, which is why it is one of our most important jobs to inform the general public on the function of these animals. Moreover, the Shark Foundation also supports scientific projects directly trimmed to shark protection because our knowledge on sharks is still insufficient to adequately protect them.

Public Relations Activities 1998

The Shark Foundation was presented to the general public in various Swiss cities through a series of lectures held by Dr. E. Ritter at schools and community centers, as well as through radio and TV interviews (DRS 3, Radio Aktuell, Tele Züri).

The Shark Foundation office answered hundreds of faxes, letters, E-mails and telephone calls with inquiries on sharks and their protection. We supported various television stations, specialist journals, as well as magazines (e.g. RTL II, Sat 1, Pro 7, Discovery Channel, Bolero, Focus) with information and facts for their shark programs and articles.

Our German-language internet pages were visited about 32,000 times, the English pages about 25,000 times. Without exception reactions have been positive. Via internet we also received about 600 inquiries from interested people who we provided with information on the Shark Foundation and its work. A greater part of these people also supported our work with a donation.

The Shark Foundation produced a three-minute film on shark protection for the German internet provider Schlund and Partner. 60,000 CD-ROMs of the film were distributed at various German internet trade fairs.

In the Fall cooperation with the international media service *Shark Info* was launched.

Representatives from the European Elasmobranch Association (a European association for the protection of sharks and rays) asked the Shark Foundation if it would take over the representation of this organization in Switzerland. The Foundation agreed and cooperation is expected to officially begin in 1999.

The planned touring exhibit, whose purpose is to make the biology and endangerment of sharks known to the general public, has been roughly outlined and will be implemented in 1999.

The teaching units "Evolution of Sharks" and "Shark Behavior" have been completed.

1998 Projects

Shark Migrations

In 1998 we bought an ultrasound transmitter and receiver for about CHF 14,000 for use in Dr. E. Ritter's project on shark migrations at Walker's Cay, Bahamas. The project planning phase

has been completed and the electronic recordal of shark movements will begin in March 1999.

Body Language and Shark Behavior

The first scientific publication describing the behavior of sharks and their body language was produced with the support of the Shark Foundation and was submitted and accepted by the renowned scientific journal "Copeia" (published early 2000).

Molecular-Biological Investigations of White Sharks

In 1998 initial contacts were made with South African institutions (Stellenbosch University, South African Museum, Department of Sea Fisheries) and possibilities were looked at on site. Since white sharks were put under strong protection in 1991, we could not begin our projects right away. Instead we had to submit the respective project ideas. These were well received and since then have been looked at by the South African Department of Sea Fisheries.

Internet Shark Database

The shark database currently holds information on about 200 out of more than 460 existing shark species.

Projects 1999

Shark Nurseries

In the summer of 1999 we will begin our research on the shark nurseries located in flat coastal regions (e.g. mangrove areas) where sharks seek protection to give birth to their offspring and where their pups grow up.

The Shark Foundation supports this project with approx. CHF 6,000.

Body Language and Shark Behavior

In 1999 the Shark Foundation supported further research on shark body language and behavior. Two scientific publications are in progress. In order to help improve the analysis of shark movements, the Foundation will purchase a digital underwater camera.

The planned investments and financial support of the projects in 1999 total approx. CHF 22,000.

Molecular-Biological Investigation of White Sharks

In January the Shark Foundation had talks with responsible offices in South Africa and, in cooperation with the Department of Sea Fisheries, the University of Stellenbosch and the South African Museum, decided to submit two projects for the protection of white sharks in South Africa. Both projects were accepted on March 3, 1999, and we were able to begin our work in the summer of 1999. They were carried out mainly by members of the Shark Foundation and the University of Zurich.

In 1999 we will set aside approx. CHF 40,000 for these projects.

Shark Exhibit

The touring exhibit should be completed in 1999 and will be seen for the first time in 2000, parts of the exhibit perhaps even at an earlier date. The realization of this exhibit is budgeted with about CHF 40,000 and once again we are trying to gain the support of conservation groups and other institutions as sponsors. A video on sharks is to be produced for the touring exhibit.

Internet Shark Database

In 1999 all available information on the distribution of more than 460 shark species as well as many species descriptions and pictures as possible must be entered into the database.

U.S. Shark Foundation

In the spring of 1999 the Shark Foundation plans to establish an associate foundation in the U.S. Initially, the Shark Foundation (U.S.) will concentrate on the planning and realization of an underwater national park at Walker's Cay, Bahamas. The national park shall be open to the public and provide visitors with the opportunity to observe sharks and other ocean creatures in their natural habitat. Visitors can learn about indigenous animals and plants in courses and lectures given on the park. The park should also serve as a protection zone for sharks and as a natural laboratory where they can be studied in their natural surroundings.

Activities in Switzerland

In addition to the above-mentioned projects we will investigate shark imports into Switzerland and if necessary will negotiate with the importers. We will continue to organize lectures, putting greater efforts into alerting the public on the endangerment of sharks.
