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WWF Shark Swim

Abstract to follow.

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Nursery areas of elasmobranch fishes in the coastal waters of the British Isles

Nursery areas are utilised by many species of elasmobranch fishes and are important habitats for neonatal and juvenile individuals. Nursery areas of coastal elasmobranchs are typically in shallower waters than areas inhabited by the adults, and usually provide abundant food resources and protection from predation. Nursery areas have been documented for several species of carcharhinid and sphyrnid sharks, although there have been fewer studies on the nursery grounds of other families. Additionally, there are few records of elasmobranch nursery grounds in the coastal waters of the British Isles. Groundfish survey data (1988-1998) from the English Channel, Irish Sea and Bristol Channel were used to identify those locations where juvenile demersal elasmobranchs and the egg cases of oviparous species (e.g. *Raja* spp. and *Scyliorhinus canicula*) occur. Recent data on the macro-epibenthic assemblages within the study areas are used to describe some of the biological characteristics of these juvenile habitats.

Ian K. FERGUSSON, The Shark Trust

After a Millenium of Mythology....What is the current status of Mediterranean white sharks

Through a slide-illustrated presentation, the current status of the white shark in Mediterranean Sea will be described, using additional unpublished data gathered since 1994. After a short hiatus in reporting effort, census of regional captures and reliable encounters was boosted through 1998 by a joint programme co-ordinated by the Shark Trust and ICRAM, Italy. Noteworthy was the first moving image footage of a living white shark in Mediterranean waters, collected in September 1998; a photographed encounter off Tuscany in late December 1998, and the capture of another neonatal specimen from the Sicilian Channel during August that year. Moreover, an alleged record-size Maltese white shark from 1987, reportedly 713cm TL, can now be refuted based on good photographic evidence uncovered in 1998. Switching emphasis towards the oft-misreported issue of white shark-human interactions, a summary will be given of revised MEDSAF records between 1899-1998, which have been critically reviewed and updated as part of their recent inclusion within the AES-ISAF global shark attack database.

Ian K. FERGUSSON, The Shark Trust

A Bite of Reality: The making of the BBC-National Geographic's 1995 Wildlife Special, 'Great White Shark'

Using slides and video, the speaker - who acted as a consultant for the production - will relate how in 1995, the BBC Natural History Unit aimed to set a new benchmark in the wildlife film-making genre's treatment of sharks with their Emmy-winning special, Great White Shark. With anecdotes, the presentation will focus upon the aims of the production; the locations, the personnel and methodology used - especially novel cinematographic techniques including 'Cittercam', remotely-operated seabed mini-cameras and other 'stand-off' techniques that largely made SCUBA diving a redundant part of the shoot. Previously unseen footage will show how the crew worked in all weather at Dyer Island, South Africa - then an unspoilt and largely unknown locality - to capture astonishing footage of white sharks preying upon Cape Fur Seals. Purposefully avoiding the shark attack topic at the edit suite, the completed film instead aimed to raise the on-screen profile of the white shark to that of a dignified, spectacular predator - much as had been already accomplished by the BBC-NHU with tigers, lions, leopards and orcas.

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Age and growth of the blue shark, *Prionace glauca*, from southern Brazil.

Growth rings of 188 specimens of *Prionace glauca*, caught with longline in south Brazilian water from 1996 to 1998, were counted in the intermedialia of sections of vertebra using a dissecting microscope with transmitted light. The intermedialia of a section are constructed of groups of cells called chondrocytes surrounded by extracellular matrix, this is known as chondroid tissue. Although this structure remains the same in the intermedialia, at microscopical level optical differences were found. With transmitted light under a dissecting microscope translucent rings alternating with opaque zones were found. Using alizarin red S coloration it was shown that the translucent rings were less and the opaque zone more calcified. Counting growth rings took place at the border of the opaque zone to the translucent ring. Establishment of the relationship between centrum radius and total length (TL) resulted in identification of the first growth ring as birth mark. Through study of literature it was established that *Prionace glauca* is born in January with a TL of 45 cm. Study of the seasonal variation of the marginal increment revealed that after birth, once a year, the formation of a translucent ring occurs in winter, about July. The body size at the age of formation of each growth ring was back-calculated, and after interpreting the ring counts in terms of age, the age of each specimen in years and months was determined. The Von Bertalanffy growth curve was fitted to the measured values of length-at-age and to the back-calculated values of length-at-age. This research was supervised by Professor Carolus Vooren.
