Project updates: Monitoring and Environmental Education to Support Conservation of Endangered Species in an African Shark Nursery

Our work monitoring juvenile sharks involves the application of two methods, namely beach gillnet-based bycatch and Baited Remote Underwater Video (BRUV). This year, to date, we have carried out more than 50 monitoring sessions consisting of more than 100 hours of gillnet soaking time and BRUV images. We sampled a total of 771 individuals of the species milk shark (*Rhizoprionodon acutus*; n= 668), scalloped hammerhead (*Sphyrna lewini*; n= 61), blacktip (*Carcharhinus limbatus*; n=29), and Atlantic weasel (*Paragaleus pectoralis*; n= 13).



Figure 1: Image of blacktip (*Carcharhinus limbatus*) and milk (*Rhizoprionodon acutus*) sharks caught during BRUV monitoring.

We bring the community to the beach to watch our monitoring work and take the opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of protecting sharks and the nursery of multiple species, all of which are threatened with extinction.



Figure 2. Dr. Rui Rosa, scientific director of the Sphyrna Association, accompanies a child to safely handle and release a sampled scalloped hammerhead shark (Sphyrna lewini) after receiving a shark awareness session with other children. @Jaquelino Varela/Sphyrna Association

We also go out into the community and talk to children, teachers and institutional staff. Our environmental education sessions have already reached more than 1000 people directly and indirectly, including fishers, divers, fishmongers, tourists and schoolchildren. These activities have taken place on two islands, specifically the island of Boa Vista and the island of Santiago, the largest one in the Cabo Verde archipelago.



Figure 3: An environmental education session on sharks held in a classroom in Tarrafal, on the island of Santiago, with 5th and 6th graders.

Next November we will start tagging juvenile sharks with spaghetti tag. The aim of this research is, depending on the recapture rate of the animals, to answer, among other questions, how long the juvenile sharks spend in the bay and the extent of the area used.