

SHARKS AND RAYS: OUR PEOPLES WANT THEM ALIVE!



A Statement by the Diving Industry on the Importance of
Living Sharks and Rays for Coastal Livelihoods





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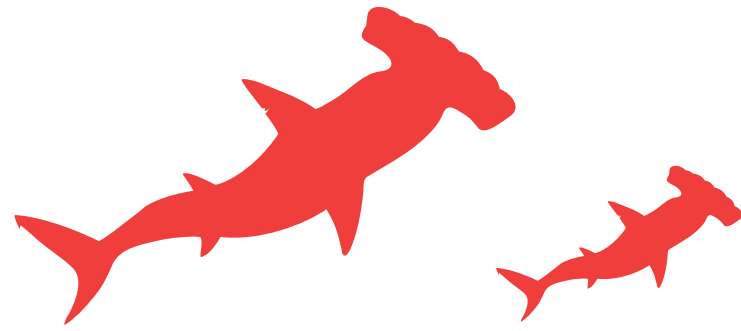
Divers for Sharks is a global coalition of more than 15,000 diving businesses, professional and recreational divers concerned with the conservation of sharks and rays to protect jobs and revenue generated by shark- and ray-watching and by these animals' role in maintaining a healthy marine ecosystem.

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Text: José Truda Palazzo, Jr., Paulo Guilherme Alves Cavalcanti, Daniel Fernando Moura and Raquel Rossa.

Cover Photo by Michelle Westmorland: Hammerhead sharks in the Galapagos, diving from the M/V Galapagos Sky.

March 2013 © Divers for Sharks



Sharks and rays are globally threatened by overfishing and, in particular, the international trade in shark fins (and manta ray gill rakers) to supply a business which is **neither essential nor sustainable**.

An estimated 100 million sharks and an unspecified number of rays are falling prey to these wasteful practices every year, and species such as hammerhead sharks, oceanic whitetips, and manta rays are being wiped out at an alarming rate.

In contrast, diving provides an opportunity to generate jobs and income – especially in developing countries – from the protection of these fascinating and vulnerable animals.

But killing off the world's sharks and rays is killing off our businesses in many places or severely reducing their profit potential by destroying a major attraction and altering the marine environment in a detrimental way.

We hope that the interests of the diving industry and the millions of people who depend on it will be taken into account by those making public policy decisions regarding sharks.

These animals need protection now, and by protecting them we are ensuring the protection of our families who depend on their presence in our shared oceans to continue making a sustainable living. The time to act to protect sharks and rays and diving industry jobs is NOW.

José Truda Palazzo, Jr.

Instructor: PADI - Professional Association of Diving Instructors, Advanced Open Water Diver #0703090856

Paulo Guilherme Alves Cavalcanti

Instructor: Scuba Schools International DCSI # 4790
SSI Platinum Pro 5000 Dive

Coordinators, Divers for Sharks.



“To watch the behavior of sharks and rays in loco is much more tasty than eating them. On this line of thinking I hope to see ever more protection for these key species!”

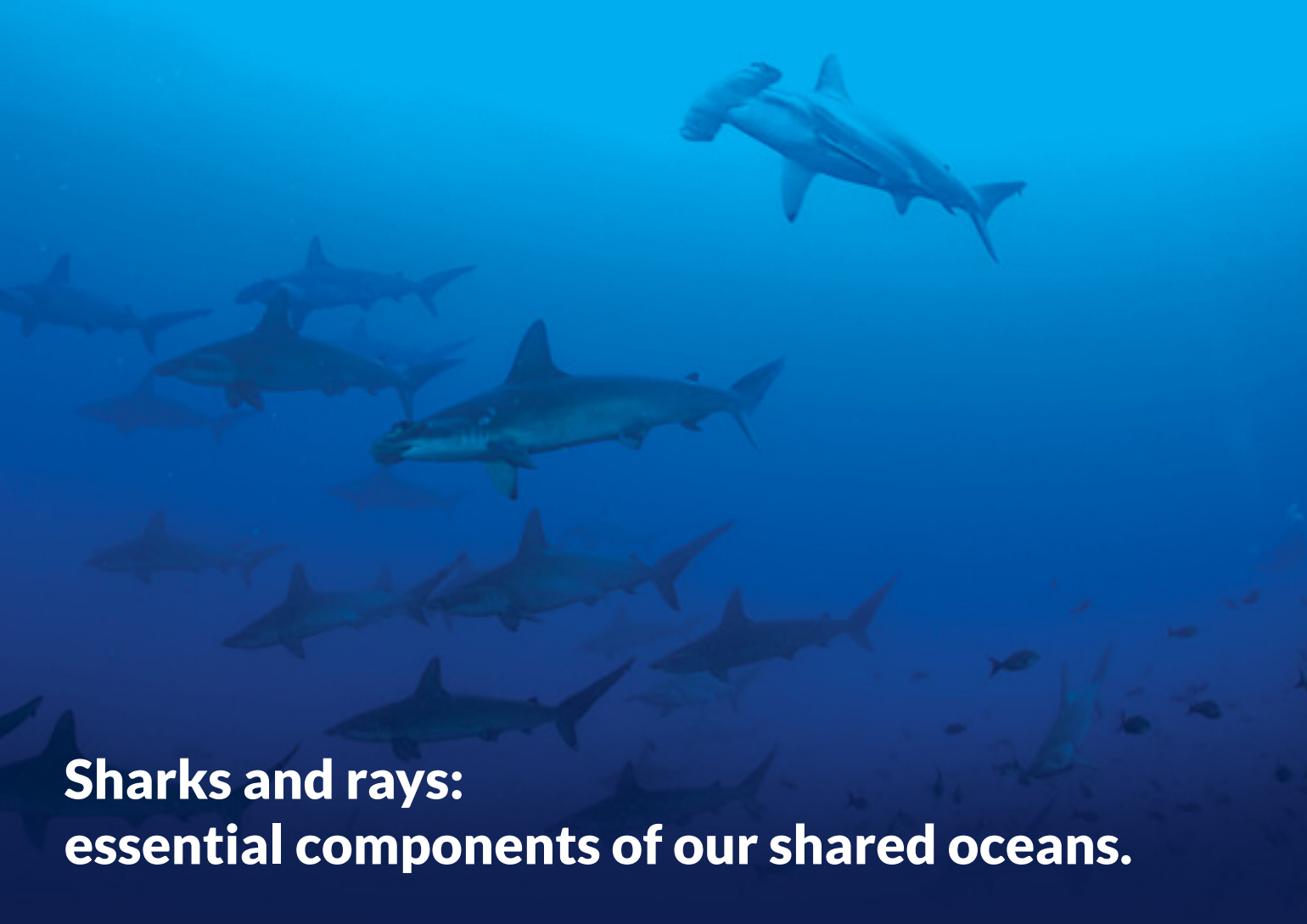
Claudio “Bodão” Soares, PADI Instructor at Águas Claras Diving, Fernando de Noronha, Brazil.



“Sharks, rays, marine turtles, dolphins, are species with great touristic value and little nutritional interest. Tourists from around the world come to my country to see these species, and by so doing bring us a market and jobs. These marine species are a national treasure, and we must redouble efforts to protect and conserve such marine resources in order to safeguard the very life of our communities.”

Carlos Macuacua, first Mozambican Dive Instructor and Executive Director of Bitonga Divers, the professional native scuba divers association, Inhambane, Mozambique.

Hammerhead shark, Galapagos, Ecuador.
Photo © Sandro Cesar do Nascimento



Sharks and rays: essential components of our shared oceans.

Sharks have roamed the world's oceans for hundreds of millions of years, and have become essential to maintain the health of marine ecosystems. Scientific research has proven beyond doubt that their role as top predators is key to the functioning of complex food webs, and the continued existence of environments from coral reefs to seagrass meadows.

Yet sharks are becoming endangered worldwide by decades of overfishing, and in more recent years by the international trafficking of their fins, destined to fulfill an unnecessary, wasteful market niche of “shark fin soup” which function is merely status-related. A key component of marine ecosystems is being destroyed to appease a dubious taste without any nutritional need to it.

Similarly, the majestic manta rays are being destroyed for the trade in their gill rakers, which have no proven medical value at all but are trafficked to serve the market for bogus “traditional medicine” – as it is NOT recognized as an element of actual Traditional Chinese Medicine at all.

Hammerhead sharks at Darwin’s Arch, Galapagos, Ecuador. © Gabriel Ganme



“I have been fully employed in the Recreational Scuba Tourism Industry since September 1968. During this time I have witnessed a frightening decline in many of our ocean species – the most obvious perhaps, is the significant decline in the world’s shark population!

Lemon sharks & divers, Bahamas. © Raquel Rossa

And now as a result, this shortage is driving an increasing demand for Manta/Mobulid Rays to replace declining availability of Shark Fins as well as for the misinformed use of Manta/Mobulid Ray gill rakers in Chinese Medicine.

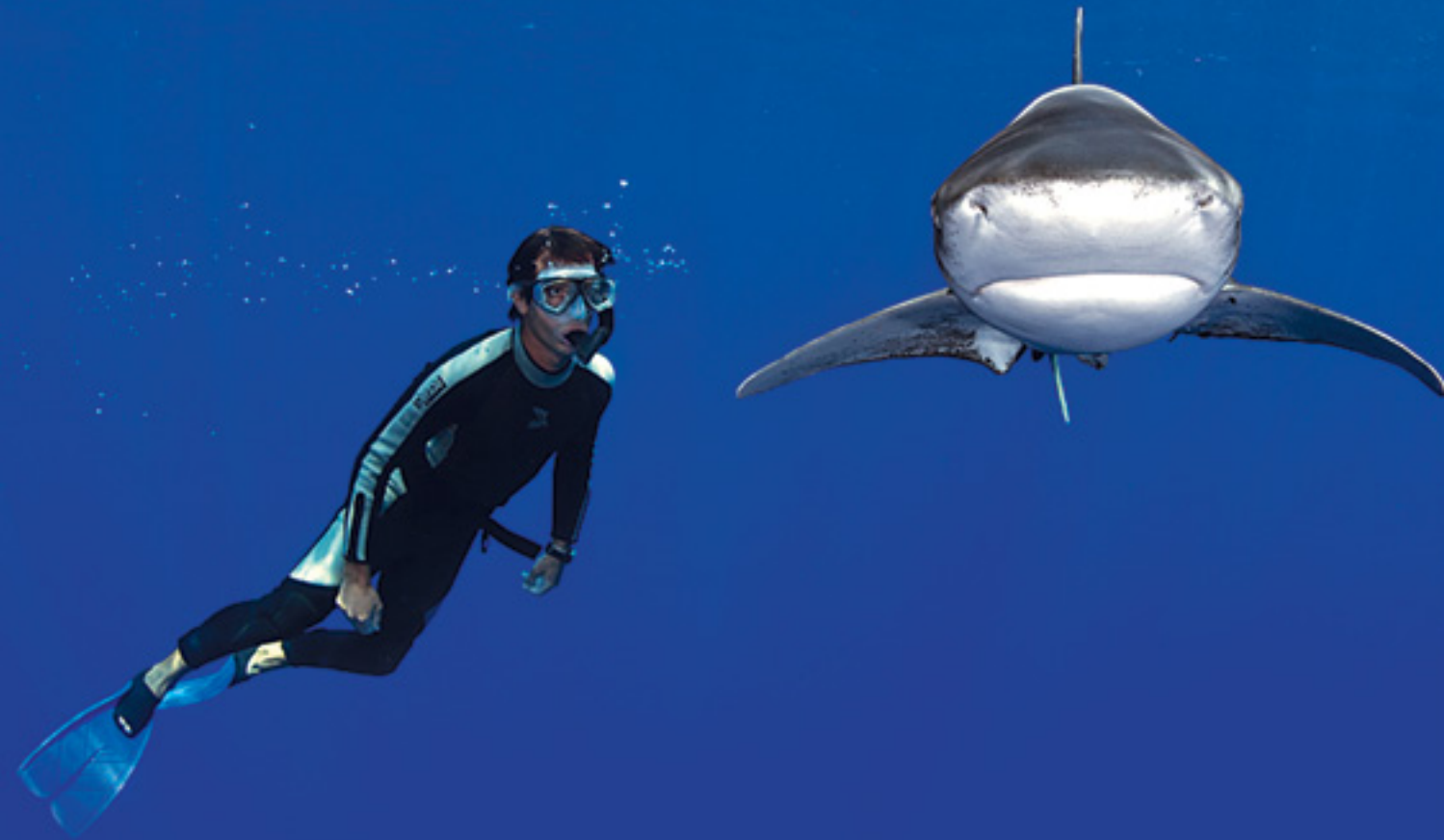
If the onslaught against these magnificent creatures for short term gain & greed is not stopped NOW, then the oceans we will leave to our kids & grandkids will be very different from the magnificence of these same oceans we enjoyed as kids ourselves, and the financial loss to the world’s tourism destinations will be in the BILLIONS of (long term) dollars!

Peter Hughes, President of DivEncounters Inc., a company operating in Ecuador, Honduras, Indonesia, Maldives, Mexico, the Philippines and the United States.



Diving, an industry generating millions of jobs and billions in revenue – threatened by the destruction of the marine environment.

Recreational Diving is not only an educational hobby – it is a very relevant industry generating billions of dollars in jobs and income worldwide, providing enormous benefits especially for coastal communities in developing countries.



Studies conducted in recent years¹ concluded that SCUBA divers are responsible for almost 2 million dive vacations every year, spending in excess of US\$ 4 billion, or approximately US\$ 2,400 per person per trip.

If you consider that in 2011 alone a single dive certification agency, PADI, issued more than 900,000 certifications², it is easy to realize the importance of the diving market to international tourism and to its multiple developing country destinations. In total, diving generates about US\$ 8 billion in revenues worldwide³.

Divers engaging in international tourism are very keen on seeing healthy ecosystems and certain “flagship species”, which presence is essential to ensure that a dive destination maintains its attractiveness.

For sharks, surveys have demonstrated that at least 76% of divers would be willing to pay additional costs to see sharks during dives⁴.

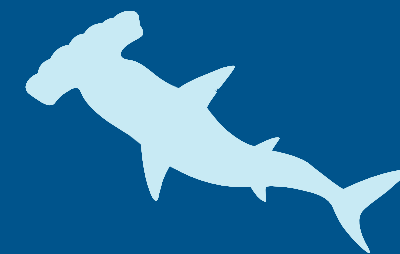
The relevance of sharks and rays for international diving tourism has been studied worldwide and the results support the demand of several developing countries for the international community to support shark conservation.

The following figures, taken from published scientific surveys, can give you a quick idea of the estimated annual value of shark and ray viewing in just a few of the countries which benefit from this type of tourism:

Location	Value in US\$/year	Reference Study
Australia (West)	US\$ 12 million	<i>Martin et al. 2006</i>
Bahamas	US\$ 78 million	<i>Cline 2008</i>
Belize	US\$ 3.7 million	<i>Graham 2004</i>
Canary Islands	US\$ 22.8 million	<i>De la Cruz Modino et al. 2010</i>
Fiji	US\$ 42.2 million	<i>Vianna et al. 2011</i>
French Polynesia	US\$ 5.4 million	<i>Clua et al. 2011</i>
Maldives	US\$ 38.6 million	<i>Martin et al. 2006</i>
Palau	US\$ 18 million	<i>Vianna et al. 2012</i>
Seychelles	US\$ 9.49 million	<i>Topelko & Dearden 2005</i> <i>Rowat & Engelhardt 2007</i>
South Africa	US\$ 5.9 million	<i>Dicken & Hosking 2009</i> <i>Hara et al. 2003</i>

Table adapted from www.sharksavers.org

There are also several studies estimating the value of a single living shark for the diving business. In Palau, for instance, a shark generates US\$ 179,000/year⁵, while in the Red Sea it can be worth as much as US\$ 300,000/year⁶; in comparison a dead shark might yield only a one-time US\$ 150- 200 including its fins. Global diving revenues of diving with manta and mobula rays, on the other hand, has been estimated at US\$ 100 million⁷.



“In Palau, for instance, a shark generates **US\$ 179,000/year**, while in the Red Sea it can be worth as much as **US\$ 300,000/year**⁶”



“In comparison a dead shark might yield only a **one-time US\$ 150 - 200** including its fins.”



More than seven tons of illegal shark fins confiscated by federal agents before being smuggled from Northern Brazil to Asia. Photo © Brazilian Government/IBAMA



Shark fins originated in Brazil, where many shark species are in sharp decline, are commonly found in Hong Kong markets" Photo © Alex Hofford.

The fact that divers seek healthy ecosystems and flagship species such as sharks and rays in their travel is extremely relevant to those coastal and island communities which still preserve their marine resources, sometimes with great effort, against external threats such as environmental degradation and overfishing.

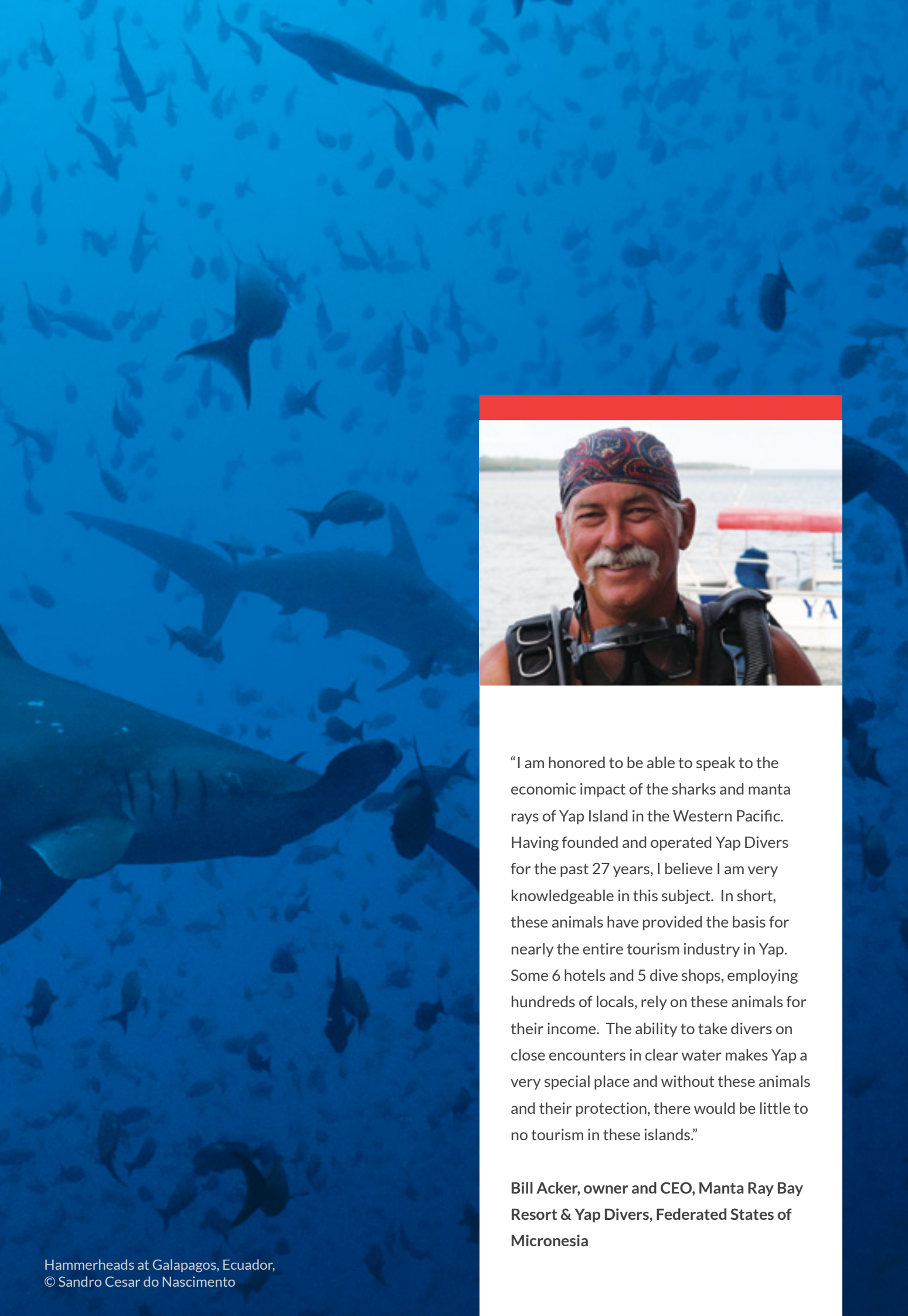
However, international trade in sharks and rays is a damaging, negative influence over which coastal and island communities have very little power or influence. The abusive, wasteful and unnecessary shark fin and ray gill rake trades are directly impacting dive businesses and diminishing the value of several diving destinations around the world.

The shark fin trade is particularly bad. Even where still legal, the shark fin trade usually serves as a cover-up for massive volumes of contraband. Developing countries have enormous difficulties in enforcement of such illegal fisheries, and importing countries rarely care enough so as to prevent illegal shipments from being accepted into their domestic markets.

We, the coastal and island communities who protect our sharks and rays for general benefit of our peoples and everyone on the planet, are being robbed of our economic opportunities by this traffic.



Finning taking place inside a federally protected area, St. Peter and St. Paul Rocks, off Northeastern Brazil. In the background a small juvenile oceanic whitetip shark being killed for its fins. Photo © Divers for Sharks



"I am honored to be able to speak to the economic impact of the sharks and manta rays of Yap Island in the Western Pacific. Having founded and operated Yap Divers for the past 27 years, I believe I am very knowledgeable in this subject. In short, these animals have provided the basis for nearly the entire tourism industry in Yap. Some 6 hotels and 5 dive shops, employing hundreds of locals, rely on these animals for their income. The ability to take divers on close encounters in clear water makes Yap a very special place and without these animals and their protection, there would be little to no tourism in these islands."

Bill Acker, owner and CEO, Manta Ray Bay Resort & Yap Divers, Federated States of Micronesia



Manta Rays in Yap, Federated States of Micronesia. © MRBH/Yap Divers





Hammerhead shark and diver, Bahamas. © Jacques Dequeker



Lemon shark & diver, Bahamas, Photo © Jacques Dequeker.

Once decimated by overfishing and international trafficking, shark and ray populations may take years to recover, if ever. Usually they mature late, reproduce slowly, and have great difficulty in rebuilding their numbers even under full protection, if it comes too late. Some species are particularly vulnerable to such damage.

Hammerhead sharks of several species have been globally endangered by overfishing. Populations have plummeted worldwide, and some estimates point to from 80 to 99% of hammerheads of several species already wiped out by overfishing - promoted by the fin trade - both in the Atlantic and Pacific ocean basins⁸. Hammerheads sustain a significant part of the dive industry in countries such as Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico and others.

Oceanic whitetip sharks, once widespread and relatively abundant, are also being wiped out like so many other species. Data for the Pacific is quite deficient but in the Atlantic estimates of decline range from 70 to 99%⁹.

In areas such as the Red Sea, parts of the Caribbean, Hawaii and others they are very important attractions for diving.

Manta rays are an invaluable asset for the diving industries of countries such as Brazil, Federated States of Micronesia, Maldives, Mozambique and many others. Throughout their range, dramatic declines in both catches and sightings have been documented.¹⁰



Tiger sharks and diver, Bahamas © Raquel Rossa



The global diving industry and the communities where we generate jobs and income deserve to be heard about shark and ray conservation:

Sharks and rays are essential for healthy marine ecosystems, and these are essential for ALL dive operations.

Sharks and rays are major direct attractions to several coastal and island communities which depend on diving tourism to generate sustainable, long-lasting jobs.

The international trade in shark fins and manta/mobula gill rakers is unnecessary for human nutrition or health, and fuels the destruction of shark and ray populations worldwide.

We must ensure that international treaties and agreements with management jurisdiction over either international trade in wildlife or fishing regulations, as well as governments of all coastal States, listen to and respect the needs, views and conservation efforts of the diving industry and the communities which partner with it for healthier oceans.

Protecting sharks and rays NOW is an urgent need if we want to protect the jobs and revenue generated by the global diving industry.

WE WANT THEM ALIVE!

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The global diving industry needs healthy shark and ray populations in order to continue generating jobs and income for coastal communities.

Please help us save them, for this and for future generations.

