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## Sharks in Hurricanes & A Litany of Errors

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June 12, 2021

**Sharks Have an Inbuilt Compass.** Research by the Save Our Seas Foundation and Florida's State University has produced solid evidence that sharks use the Earth's magnetic field to navigate their long-distance forays across the ocean. The researchers followed a bonnethead shark (*Sphyrna tiburo*), a species known return to a specific location each year, and used magnetic displacement experiments to test 20 wild-caught juveniles. Their studies exposed sharks to magnetic conditions representing locations hundreds of miles away from where the sharks were actually caught. Researchers could predict how they would reorientate northward in the southern magnetic field and southward in the northern magnetic field. The findings also help explain impressive feats by other shark species, such as a great white shark that was documented migrating 6000 miles between South Africa and Australia, then returning to the same exact location the following year. *Scitech Daily*

**Is Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease Spread by Divers? It May Be.** Stony coral disease is killing coral all over the Caribbean – Cozumel shut down much of its reef system to divers in 2019 because of it. Until recently, researchers say the disease progress on a uniform pattern throughout the Caribbean, but in Grand Cayman, it appears at random dive sites - and only at those sites – causing scientists to suspect that it may be spread unwittingly by divers and dive boats. Even with the marked reduction in diving since the Cayman's closed their borders to tourists, local divers' equipment and boats seem to carry the disease and contaminate dive sites. If true that divers are spreading it, one must speculate that diving could soon be severely limited from Florida throughout the Caribbean depending upon what local governments decide.

**A Common Antibiotic Slows Stony Tissue Loss Coral Disease.** Amoxicillin paste is 95 percent effective at treating infected tissues. Within three months, divers from the Florida Atlantic University's Oceanographic Institute applying amoxicillin to infected corals, curing 95 percent of them. But, it has to be applied individually by a diver, making it a daunting task requiring endless divers to cover much territory. *Frontiers in Marine Science*

**When You Can't Dive Somewhere Exotic, Dive Somewhere Useful.** Teams of up to 10 scuba divers have begun cleaning up the trash from the bottom of Lake Tahoe in a six-month effort to rid it of discarded fishing rods, tires, beer cans, and other debris. Planning to remove trash along the entire 72 miles of shoreline, they retrieved around 200 pounds of garbage on their first session and will return with

lifting gear for heavy items such as buckets filled with cement and car fenders. Why not organize a few divers and tackle a lake near you? *New Westminster Record*

**How Do Sharks Cope During Hurricanes?** Scientists wondered so researchers from the University of Miami's Shark and Research Conservation Program attached acoustic tracking tags to four species of sharks during hurricanes Matthew in 2016 and Irma in 2017. Whereas large bull sharks, great hammerheads, and most nurse sharks sought deeper, calmer water, large tiger sharks did the opposite in the Bahamas. Undaunted by the turmoil of destructive wind and waves, they were actually drawn to it, doubling in their numbers when winds of 165 mph encompassed the islands. *Idaho Statesman*

**Was Your Trip Canceled, but You Can't Get a Refund?** COVID hit, divers canceled their every trip, dive operations shut down, and payments made were in limbo. Some operators refunded money, others promised a future trip, and still others went silent. Were you a diver who paid for a trip and still have been unable to resolve it by rescheduling or getting a refund? If so, we want to know the details. Write to [BenDDavison@undercurrent.org](mailto:BenDDavison@undercurrent.org).

**New Law Proposed to Protect Sharks.** During the second week of May, the U.S. Senate voted to ban the possession, sale, and trade in shark fins in the U.S. The House of Representatives is considering a similar measure. You can add your voice to support the proposals [here](#).

**Undercurrent Divers are Returning to the Sea.** Look for an email shortly that's tell you what a few have been up to, how COVID is being handled, and what it's like to get wet again.

**A Litany of Errors Results in a Tragic Fatality.** The death of a teenaged diver in Montana's Lake McDonald (elevation 3153 feet) last November has led to a \$12 million lawsuit filed in the Missoula District Court by the girl's parents and two other divers. The defendants are the owners of Gull Dive (David and Jannine Olson), instructor Seth Liston, trainee instructor Debbie Snow, and PADI Worldwide. According to the suit filed, 18-year-old Linnea Mills was on the second dive of a PADI Advanced Open Water course in a second-hand drysuit she had purchased; it had no inflator hose, and she was unaware that it needed one. The course was taught by inexperienced instructors who might have been unaware of the ramifications of diving altitude. When they realized Mills had no inflator hose, she was instructed to use her BC for buoyancy control. The instructors placed 44 lbs. of lead, not on a weight belt but in her drysuit and BC pockets. The deceased apparently suffered suit squeeze and, she was neither able to ascend due to being over-weighted, or able to control her descent. Bob Gentry, one of the two other divers under instruction, chased her below 100 feet but was unable to release her weights and abandoned his attempt. *Montana Today*

**Thirteen Lessons that Saved Thirteen Lives: The Thai Cave Rescue.** John Volanthen, along with Rick Stanton, was the cave diver who found the 13 young footballplayers and their coach trapped by floodwaters one-and-a-half miles inside a Thai cave system. The story of their 2018 rescue is one of bravery, persistence, and heroism. What makes a slightly built, ordinary-looking, bespectacled, self-deprecating Englishman into a cool-headed underwater cave explorer? Not only is this book an enthralling account of the Thai cave rescue, but it also explores how one copes with the impossible, something from which we can all learn. [Available in hardcover](#) and [Kindle](#).

**Possible Good News on Predators of Lionfish.** Lionfish University posted on its Facebook page that Captain Scott Childress, owner of the *Just Shoot Me II*, and crewmembers Ritchie Zacker and Dean Phillips, were spearfishing in the Gulf of Mexico on May 12 when Scott shot a 30-inch gag grouper; in its stomach was a 14-inch lionfish. This is the fourth time they have seen lionfish eaten by predators. The others were two red grouper and amberjack. They saw no evidence the lionfish had been previously speared, suggesting that at last larger predators have developed a taste for this invasive species. Let's hope so because the latest word is that they

have spread into Brazilian waters. [lionfishuniversity.org](http://lionfishuniversity.org)

**Is This the Future of Our Oceans?** A massive marine mucilage (sea snout) bloom in Turkey's Dardanelles and Sea of Marmara is killing all undersea life. President Erdogan has vowed to curtail this bloom that is destroying the livelihoods of fishermen and boat operators alike. He will dispatch a 300-member team to investigate the cause, which is likely due to climate change and untreated wastewater emanating from Istanbul and its environs. It was first encountered in Turkey in 2007 and discovered in the Aegean Sea near Greece. *BBC*



**Alligator Attacks Florida Diver.**

Jeffrey Heim, a Tampa, FL, resident, is recovering after an alligator attacked him during a dive in the Myakka River. While looking for shark teeth near Venice, the alligator bit him on the head and hand, resulting in a skull fracture that required 34 staples. When alligators breed during May and June, they can be more aggressive. Heim was lucky to survive. *ABC Action News*

**Badass Sister Rescues Her Twin from the Jaws of a Croc.** When a crocodile grabbed her twin sister Melissa, Georgie Laurie saved her by repeatedly hitting the animal in the face. Despite being told the waters were safe, the British 28-year-old twin sisters, both experienced divers, were swimming just a few days ago in the lagoon at Puerto Escondido, on Mexico's Pacific coast. Melissa was suddenly dragged underwater down. Georgie successfully freed her and dragged her back to their boat as the crocodile made repeated attacks. Melissa had inhaled water and had a punctured lung. Both ladies were taken to the local hospital and put on intravenous antibiotics to counter an infection from the croc's mouth. *BBC*

**Back To Bonaire.** On June 5, Bonaire saw the resumption of nonstop Wednesday and Saturday flights of American Airlines and Delta Airlines from Miami and Atlanta, respectively. There are severe requirements for antigen tests and PCR tests before departure, so do your homework before leaving. *Bonaire Tourism*

*Stay Safe  
Wear a Mask, Socially Distance, Wash Your Hands  
Get Vaccinated  
Don't Share Your Air*

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Wash your hands



Wear a face covering



Give space



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