



Dear Friends,

July 2006, I have received this Mail, from a class in England ... They asked me, if I could answer some questions about sharks. In the following you can read our little interview. Don't miss the great posters at the end of this document!

Yours Andy Cobb

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Dear Mr Cobb,

We are a year four class in Bicester in England. Miss Black has been talking to us about sharks. We have looked at your web site and would like to ask you some questions about your work. We would love to hear back from you if possible.  
When did you first go diving?

I started SCUBA diving in 1976 but still playing representative rugby for East Africa. It was the same year that I saw my first shark and thought it was my last. It was a whale shark 16-metres long.

Have you ever been hurt by sharks?

I have over 900-hours logged underwater with sharks and never hurt by one or expect to be either, as humans are not part of their food chain.

What did you feel like when you first saw a shark?

With wonder and as there was no aggressive aura was able to enjoy and watch, though had no idea whether it would be my last encounter. However the body language was peaceful, so was I.

Is it true that more dolphins get caught in the nets than sharks?

Not true as the average number of sharks killed in the shark nets was 1000-per year. With 30% of the nets removed down to 600. However the shark nets kill more dolphins than the race particular and peculiar to our coast off KZN is able to reproduce, hence there is a negative growth rate of the population.

What's your favourite type of shark?

The Spotted Ragged Toothed Shark as it was the shark that opened the door for me into the shark world. The greatest privilege is when a great white comes and says hello and my mystery shark is the Oceanic white tip as I have not met yet. It is a very investigative shark and would love to watch the experience.

How often do sharks kill people?

World wide there is an average of 10-fatalities a year, last year 7. 30-people a year are killed by coconuts. Bees kill more people than sharks. Here in SA 29-people a day are killed on the roads and in New York 1200-people a year are hospitalised from human bite.



Do sharks swim when they sleep?

Mid water sharks sleep by swimming in a circle, fast enough for water to go through their mouth for oxygenation, to maintain position and elevation. This control is done by the spinal column and called spinal column auto pilot, as half the brain is fast asleep, the other sufficiently aware should the shark be threatened. Benthic sharks find a cave and revert to active respiration by pumping water through their gills, whilst half the brain is fast asleep and the other half on guard.

What type of sharks do you usually protect?

All sharks, but trying to get the Bull shark and spotted ragged-toothed shark fully protected

What is your favourite part of your job?

Watching shark and animal behaviour and trying to read the body language communication and the various behaviour triggers.

What inspired you to go diving with sharks?

In 1981 I was leading a dive when the Instructor pulled off my mask. A training stunt, I ignored him and eventually got my mask back, put it on and cleared it, to find myself in a cave with over 10-sharks. The instructor had seen and was trying to stop me when I lost my mask. The sharks had no aggressive aura so I stayed and watched. Eventually they were swimming around me and over me as if I was just part of the group.

That incident gave rise to a spot on the Aliwal Shoal called raggy cave. I was also a police diver and at our monthly police meetings I would show photos of sharks and talk about behaviour. The Asst Director of the Sharks Board was in the unit and some of us regular Instructors and Dive Masters were co opted into doing field work for the sharks board. We had lectures about sharks and their biology. This I have done since 1983 to date. If I was stuck with answers to questions I would go back to the shark scientists. Re the biology of the shark I would always get an answer, but soon realised the scientists knew nothing about the animal. I have 24-years of recorded behaviour and been press ganged into writing a book. The draft is done, I just need to dust it up. It will be published in German and English 2007.

How many times did it take to go diving before you were comfortable with it?

The raggy cave experience made me comfortable and then later I sat in a cave with sharks by myself and after 15-minutes keeping still every shark came and inspected my fins from 100-mm away.

Have you ever been scared of sharks?

Cautious, nervous but never frightened. Fear is a shark attractant and excites them. I have had incredible experiences where frightened divers in my group have got shark hyped up.



What is the most common shark you see?

Ragged-toothed shark and bull shark. Black tip, Spinner, Tiger, Dusky, Whale shark Mako and Great white all add to the magic.

Let me tell you The Greatest Privilege of my life with a WILD ANIMAL:

My wife and I came back from a Mozambique trip two weeks ago and I had the greatest privilege of my life with a wild animal.

a.. A 12-metre whale shark came straight up from depth to me. As I was snorkelling, it could not go over me but into or under. It did neither it turned and eye balled me eye to eye 300-mm away. Its eye remained focussed on mine and turned as it very slowly passed. It was such a personal scan as the whale shark's was so slow in passing.

b.. Same scenario as "a", but turn a metre and a half whilst scanning

c.. Same scenario again and I had to put my hand on its nose so it could push me away, as it passed. I watched it roll its eye backwards as its eye was closest to me and open as soon as it passed. Time wise to count up to 3.

d.. All the other encounters were to fin alongside and others when the animal passed below at one metre which meant having to avoid the dorsal fin and upper caudal of the tail.

None of the divers with me were allowed to touch or ride. No divers were allowed to swim straight into the shark either. They all listened.

The technique was to kit up all together and no one to race the others to get into the water. Everyone to slip into the water without a noise / splash. (It was drinks all round for me, as on one occasion I slipped and fell in with a splash) That was when we the whale sharks would pass below or easy to be able to fin alongside. I soon realised for some reason the rubber duck motors idling caused an attraction, as the whale sharks would once sounded, turn and come back up to the boat and I would then get a close scrutiny from the whale sharks. We had 9 females on one day sizes from 10 to 12 metres and the other days 3 to 5. I only saw one male.

On the way back we had a dive and every dive we had manta and devil ray encounters. I have dived with many whale sharks, but never had such an encounter with any wild animal in my life.

Please give my best wishes to Miss Black.  
Andrew.

**This resulted in the reply and the posters:**

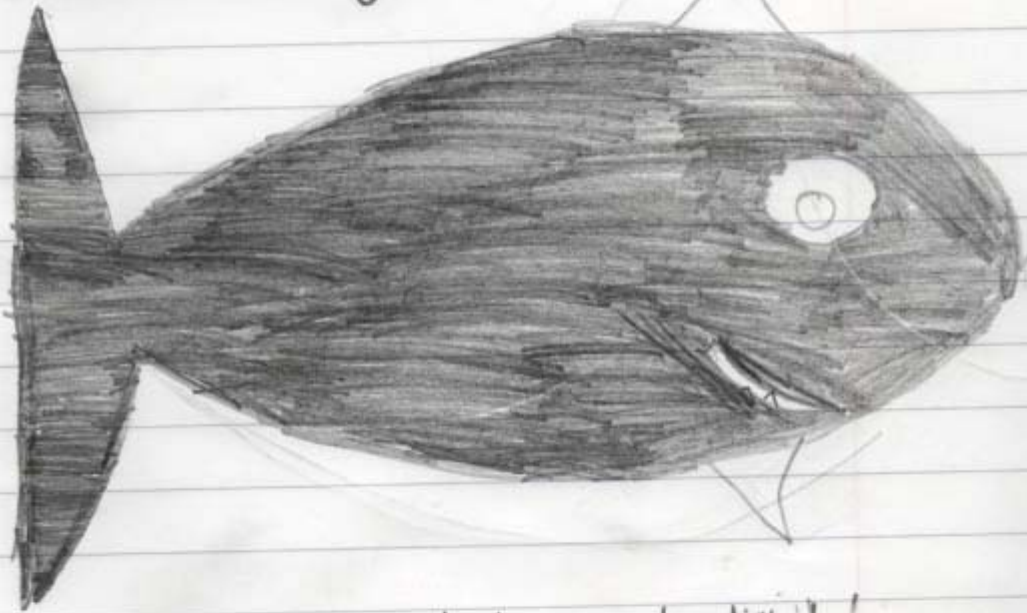
Dear Andrew, Here are some examples of the posters the children created. They were so excited to receive your reply. You are a hero in their eyes!! They are really fired up about sharks now and some boys who don't always enjoy reading have been to the library to find books on sharks. Thank you so much once again. Love Kirsten xxxxxxxx





## SAVE SHARKS

- Sharks need help
- Sharks are calm if you are calm
- Sharks know if you are frightened and they get very excited.
- Sharks aren't dangerous



Normally 1,000 sharks get killed a year by nets but cut down to 30% only 600 do now!!!

Humans are FRIENDS not good!!!

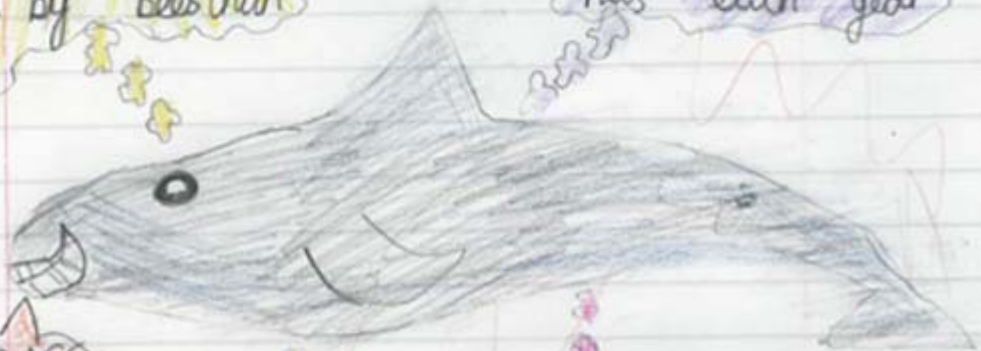


5/7/06

# SAVE OUR SHARKS

Did you know  
more people get  
killed by bees than  
sharks

1000 sharks  
get killed in  
nets each year



PLEASE  
HELP!

The movies only  
make us look mean

Humans are not  
in the sharks  
food chain

PLEASE HELP BE  
A PART!

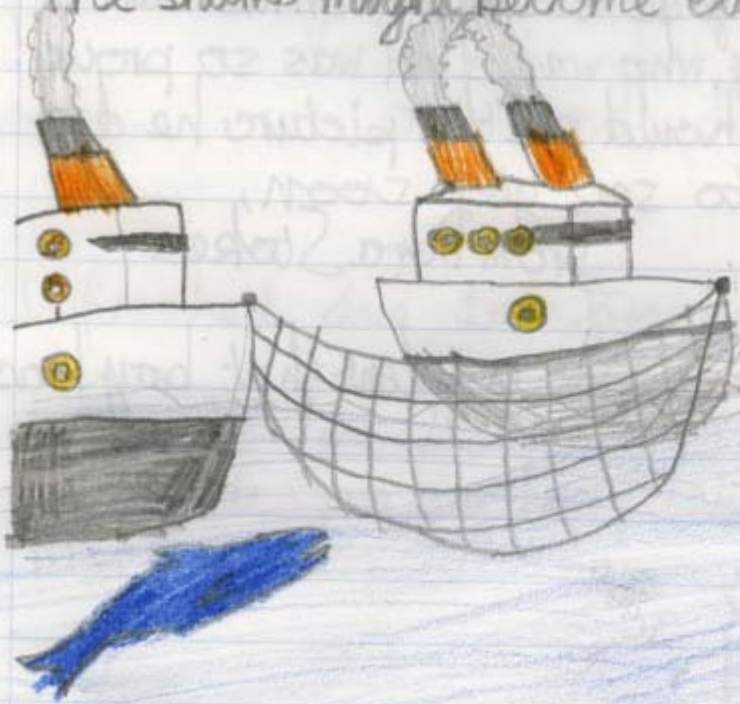


Your poster is well  
laid out.



# SHARK'S NEED PROTECTION

- Shark's aren't dangerous.
- Shark's need protection from nets.
- 1,000 sharks a year are killed by nets.
- The shark's might become extinct.





Designed by Lauren Kellorlay

# SWIMMING Sad SHARK'S



- ✦ Sharks don't hurt you because we're not part of their food chain
- ✦ bees kill more people a day than sharks a day.
- ✦ Sharks need help because so many sharks are killed a day in nets, that there is not enough sharks to breed more sharks

See



im cool