

Newsletter – Dec 2005



2005 has been a very much better year than 2004 and we have had some very nice and interesting clients, that make the difference and know we have something to offer. The real hard work is done by Jane (The Boss as you all know). Jane is driven to give service and sends out quotes almost by return. For those of you know Jane she is the heart of the business. My passion for shark and marine conservation takes an enormous amount of time and expense, but I have just been through 4-years of suicidal and unmitigated hell in trying to get legal with the SA Tourism Amendment Act. This is in order to have accredited Underwater Marine and/or Shark Diving Guides Unit Standards accepted and to be accepted as a Trainer and Assessor. This has happened at last and 2006 should start seeing some legal underwater marine and/or shark diving guides. This is 4-years after the Department of Environmental Affairs flew me to Cape Town for a 4-day workshop setting marine guide standards. This is the only time I did not have to foot the cost!

January started off by Gerhard Wegner the President of the SHARKPROJECT sponsoring my accommodation to attend the BOOT in Dusseldorf Germany, the biggest watersport fare in Europe, to be on the stand to promote SHARKSCHOOL in English for South Africa. I went with my German Associate and friend Wolf Snyckers of Boleng Adventures, who soon called himself my “nanny”.



The stand was large and I was made very welcome. Everyone was passionate about shark and the public long suffering with my English which I referred to as German. I only came unstuck with about 5-people as they were from Belgium or France, as they could speak German and not English.

After the first day I was invited to a press conference where Spain was awarded the "Shark Enemy of 2005" as they kill more sharks and sell more shark fin to Asia than any other country in the World. They also block shark issues with the European Government and CITES. Suddenly I heard my name and was awarded the "Shark Guardian 2005" in recognition of all my efforts in marine and shark conservation



At the BOOT I made some great friends and as a result of meeting [Micaela Eckermann](#), I have a live home page again. All the people on the stand donate their time and effort in supporting the Sharkproject and the sharkproject has grown with a motto of "Shark Conservation through Research". My long time friend Dr. Erich Ritter is the Sharkproject's scientist. www.sharkproject.com .

After the BOOT I flew to England to meet up with Jane who was over to see her sisters. I also had been accepted to give a talk on "Shark the Animal" at my old school. King's School Canterbury. It is the oldest school in England and was started by St Augustine. I have given presentations and done a lot of public speaking, but this one talk had me on edge. The talk went well and afterwards we attended a buffet for those that had listened to my talk including the Head Master. I was told during this post talk gathering that shark would be removed from the school menu.

The Coventry BSAC came out for their 5th tour and the "No Wingeing" rule was very acute. If you winge you pay drinks all round. 2006 I hope to be a bit cleverer with photos.

I ran many shark courses and marine environmental course, plus attended many conferences and presentations on the Environment. Likewise attending various meetings to form the Guides Association of KZN and likewise Chapter meetings of SATSA. I also sit on the Provincial Coastal Committee.

September I had a great group from Australia and we all had a fabulous time at Ponta do Ouro, staying at O La Do Ouro and some good diving also on Aliwal Shoal and the Protea Banks. Jane was able to be in Ponta as we needed the extra vehicle. The animals behaved in Hluhluwe and cameras were filled with some great shots of wildlife.

October Jane and I took off for a bit of R & R to use up some time share points in the Kruger National Park. The drought was terrible plus the amount that was burnt. The tree with no leaves meant birding was incredible and wherever there was water we caught up with animal sightings.

I shot off to England to a rugby reunion. I stayed 3-nights with my brother in law Brian for some real quality time and we both went to the reunion. The friends made whilst playing rugby for Impala Club, Provincial team and East Africa have stood the test of time. After the reunion I flew home to join Jane and her youngest sister Sarah who had come from UK for a holiday with us. We all had a great time firstly at our time share in Limpopo Province with excursions there and back. I could not go with them when they went to Hluhluwe where they had hyenas camped outside the tent every night. I followed the drama on cell phone.

My final tour of the year was with the Alistair White and Jacqui that took me into December. We had really bad weather but managed some very good dives at Sodwana and well looked after by Amoray, some incredible encounters with elephant tracking elephants at White Elephant lodge, where we were well hosted and well guided. We had some good dives on Aliwal and a fantastic dive on the MV Produce, but Protea was not at its best, though we saw bull and hammerhead sharks but the visibility was very poor. At Hluhluwe we had to superb sightings of leopard in daylight and again good animal sightings all round.

Thursday Thoughts

uShaka Marine Theme Park is a great Durban Asset, and the Aquarium great for educational visits. I have been very critical of their shark tanks as they had not created a suitable habitat. Further the corporate body of uShaka was using the shark JAWS myth to attract visitors. I was invited to give a presentation at Sea World at Thursday Thoughts where scientist present their papers. My talk was accepted that if the sharks were to be sacrificed to get their educationals up to date for proper public education and eradicate the Jaws Myth, especially their advertising. Likewise if they were going to be recognised as an Education centre and pro-conservation to form an ethics committee in the animals interest whilst in their charge. My Talk was accepted as such and got invited back to talk to their volunteer guides. That talk was about “Shark the Animal and Why the World will be in Trouble without the Sharks”. The talk went well as there was no serious time constraint and questions could be answered to in detail.

The Sardine Run

This is impossible to market as it is so unpredictable, however we focussed on shark diving and when there was activity we would go to where the birds were dropping. Most times the sardines were in the surf zone but we did get two dives in 9-metres of water, with silver walls of sardines as they parted and then 4-big bronze whalers all on hyped activity would buzz in and out to with 2-metres, which would have been their inner kinosphere.

Tiger Shark Feeding

The tiger sharks are fed in a MPA and the operators are not being charged for breaking the MPA regulations. However two instructors witnessed one of the said operators feeding shark at Quintens cave off raggy sands and this has now been formalised with the appropriate acts referred to for illegal guiding and feed sharks in a Marine protected Area (MPA).



The Sharkproject this year is “Stop Sales” and more can be gleaned from www.sharkproject.co.za.

SHARK COURSES



- **Sharkschool:** The course is on PowerPoint and format with input from Dr. Erich Ritter and covers shark the animal and behaviour with excellent photo's and film clips. Plus the endangerment of shark its consequences and how to get involved with the Sharkproject.
- **Advanced Shark Certificated Diving Course:** (NAUI and SSI) covers shark behaviour, shark attack, shark conservation and the understanding why the oceans are threatened with the demise of Shark the Regulator. Further an understanding of shark the animal to enjoy them mid water. The course diving is done on the Protea Banks and divers need to be qualified for 30-metre depths. This course is essential for any would be "Shark Diving Guides" for generic knowledge. Part of the assessment of a Shark Diving Guide is a summative assessment on shark generic knowledge accrued from my Shark Diving course and Advanced Shark Diving course.
- **Shark Diving Certificated Course:** (NAUI and SSI) covers the myth fears phobias about sharks, the biology of sharks and specific knowledge of the spotted ragged toothed shark. The diving is done on Aliwal Shoal and a shark dissection is included providing an embryo is available from the Natal Sharks Board.

OTHER COURSES

I also run ***Wreck Diving Courses*** with a section on marine archaeology as I worked four seasons on excavating a Portuguese War ship that sunk in the 1600's off Mombasa Island.

Marine Environmental courses. As a marine diving guide you will be assessed on your generic knowledge of the marine habitat and its flag ship species and for those intending to a Marine Diving Guide for safe, sustainable and informative interactions with marine flora and fauna this course will be a core factor. We do require a minimum of 4 persons to run these courses.

Guiding

I am now available for Training and Assessing Underwater Marine and or Shark Diving Guides

My Provider is AQN see www.aqn.co.za for details and verification

Andrew and Jane Cobb.

DEC 2005