

Newsletter December 2008

Life moves on. I am fitter now than I was 2-years ago and retirement from diving has allowed me to have quality time with my wife as we have an off road caravan and go to the African bush, animal and bird watching. I enjoy the snakes and insects. Jane enjoys recognizing and identifying trees and plants.

Our garden consists solely of indigenous plants consequently attracts all the birds, insects, toads, tree frogs and snakes. We have a small or mini eco system by the habitat we have created. We had to us a mini disaster, as a fierce wind storm from the North as the winds normally come from the South, blew out of the Natal Mahogany an Ibis's baby chick and nest, the size of a small chicken, out of the tree and the chick was still without flight feathers and was killed on impact as it hit the ground.

Since coming to SA, I have followed my passion and have been fighting for marine and shark conservation and Marine Ecotourism. This involves issues of marine pollution, ground water pollution from solid waste dumps and the preservation of estuaries. Estuaries are threatened by sand mining, reduced flow due to commercial water demand from rivers, soil erosion filling estuaries. Coastal development affecting wetlands behind the sand dunes, monitor Coastal development and stop development on the sand dunes and try to stop those that want to mine the sand dunes.

I am a representative of a Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) for Coastwatch the WESSA marine lobby group, the S. A. Tourist Services Association (SATSA) and the Professional Underwater Guides Association of SA (PUGASA).

As an NGO for SATSA and PUGASA I sit on the Provincial Coastal Committee. It is a quasi Government committee and monitors coastal development, estuary degradation, catchment's areas and water resources that are threatened and marine issues. Coastwatch is well represented.

I sit on two Licence Approval Forums (LAF) as a NGO for Coastwatch and PUGASA and on a quarterly basis review the 3-major South Coast Industrial effluent out falls into the Ocean.

Industry has spent mega bucks to clean up their act, with a dramatic improvement and an amazing reduction on marine impact. The process has triggered some amazing innovative research and sensitized industrial impact. Further it has created changes in process where production is doubled and effluent reduced by half. With regards to water demand has made industry start recycling and reducing their fossil fuel demand, thereby reducing the carbon footprint and make huge savings.

I tried to put something back into SA Diving as for some reason they have not participated in the Process of rewriting SA's laws and constitution and the Tourism development workshops. My efforts have been for Marine Ecotourism and my offer to be a NGO for the Diving Chapters was thrown out and no discussion.

I opened my company in 1992 and have been fully legal from day one. My company registered, accredited by SATSA, and all requirements as to audited books, Public Indemnity Insurances, public drivers licence and vehicles duly licensed to operate in specific areas. SATOUR also

required me to be an accredited guide. I was duly accredited through SATOUR, as a field guide for my wild life safaris and became the first Underwater and Shark Diving Guide in SA.

When SATOUR after change of Government became SA Tourism (SAT) with one mandate to market SA. Guide accreditation was moved to a Sector Education Authority (SETA) called THETA. I then became South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Assessor to train and assess Underwater Marine and Shark Diving Guides. All my attempts to supply the details that evolved from of the Tourism Amendment Act to the scuba skills Training Chapters failed and never had an acknowledgement of any of my correspondence. Hence the close off date for underwater guides to be accredited was August 2003, has been passed, without any attempt by dive charter boat operators and dive resorts complying with the 2nd Tourism Act, requiring dives to be in date Dive Masters and accredited guides. Likewise businesses and accredited Guides are required to be registered with their Provincial Tourism Board. My home page under guides gives all the details.

The Professional Underwater Guides Association of SA (PUGASA) was formed and all the SAQA accredited Underwater Marine and Shark Diving Guides were the founder members and for this year I am the Chairman. My term of office ends in July 2009.



PUGASA members are proof that there are some fully accredited Underwater Marine and Shark Diving Guides and we have our Association to protect our members and ensure they abide by the Associations basic requirement of to provide a safe, informed, sustainable interactive experience with marine flora and fauna and sharks. Likewise to abide by the laws and regulations of SA and be an Ambassador of SA.

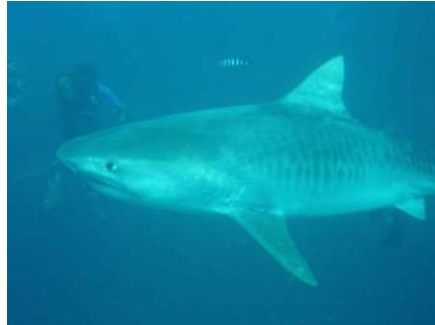
The Natal Sharks Board culling sharks in the Aliwal Shoal MPA is totally not acceptable and they cull great whites and tigers. In the last month with their drum lines and shark nets they have killed 12 tiger sharks.



Some basic facts:

1. *Humans are not part of the food chain.*
2. *Chumming is permitted in SA.*

3. Baiting is permitted in SA.
4. Feeding sharks and fish is illegal in SA
5. MCM / KwaZulu Wildlife seem incapable of ensuring compliance in the Aliwal Shoal MPA.
6. The Tiger shark encounters on Aliwal Shoal has a terrific international Tourist following.



7.. The International Tourist are furious at the NSB culling Tiger Sharks in the Aliwal Shoal MPA (12 in one month)



8. The threat to the tiger shark industry are the illegal shark nets and drum lines in a MPA.
- 9.. The threat to the Tigers are now fishermen, who see how effective the drum lines are and use the same anchored procedure at night to catch sharks. By the time the shark is filleted the public will be none the wiser.
10. Any shark over a meter long the mercury levels are too high for human consumption.

Reality:

- a. The tiger shark operators in the Aliwal Shoal MPA are FEEDING, this conditions sharks to humans and was increasing their numbers. The feeding is on a system similar to the drum lines and the sharks get conditioned to the bait drums and lured in by the drum lines at night and killed.
- b. Fishermen degutting fish on the backline before beaching put surf zone users at risk from being bitten by shark.

c. Chumming is away of making a scent trail to attract and due to currents it is highly unlikely a scent trail will come inshore that had been caught in an offshore current.

d. The white shark cage divers feed and no longer have to chum as the sharks recognise the boats and they become feeding stations.

e. Baiting attracts but the operators feed so the photographers get their shot. I have seen video's of a divers head and another his buttocks in a Tiger Shark's mouth, whilst it tastes - "Yuk human" and moves on. There was no diver reaction so they had the experience and have the stitches to prove it.

I get so mad at the ignorance of Beach and Municipality Managers. There ignorance is supported by the NSB who claim they protect the Tourist industry by culling large sharks and do no research as to why a shark bites a human.

The last shark attack so called was Indian youth fishing in Durban Harbour chest deep in the water at 1h30 and was bitten by a bull shark. Night time is shark feeding time as they have the advantage by being able reuse or enhance available light 10 times. The fisherman so bitten was doing the wrong thing at the wrong time.

The International Tourists are very angry at the Tiger shark culling by the NSB and the killing by fishermen!

My youngest daughter has passed her degree in Primary School education and leaves to go into her own flat and a job already in Durban. Jane and I have to get used to rattling around in an empty house.

Wishing everyone a Happy New Year and all the best for 2009.

Andrew and Jane.