



**A message from Meaghen McCord,
Managing Director (SASC)**

Only one year into our existence as a non-profit organisation, 2008 was a year of unprecedented growth, learning and development for SASC. Much of the past year was spent developing working partnerships with organisations and individuals to help fulfil our mandate as an inclusive and representative research and conservation organisation, and securing equipment and tools that enable us to conduct our research and outreach programmes to the best of our abilities. Although we were faced with many challenges along the way, I am excited to report SASC continues to become a recognised and respected entity in South Africa, helping ensure our long-term involvement in the conservation of our living marine resources. Personal highlights for 2008 include the development of partnerships with the WWF Responsible Fisheries Programme, the Southern African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) and our role as a joint coordinator, in association with Marine and Coastal Management (MCM) and the West Coast Shore Angling Association (WCSAA), of the first ever Responsible Shark Angling Derby in Langebaan Lagoon.

The interest and commitment we have received from our stakeholders from so many different conservation and fishery sectors illustrates how we can successfully work together to achieve a common goal, and I extend a sincere thanks to all of you for your support. I look forward to the coming year and trust it will be as exciting and inspiring as 2008.

NEWS IN BRIEF

- PADI Project AWARE Foundation grants R15, 000 to SASC for the implementation of our ecosystem-based long-term monitoring programme in Walker Bay.
- Faces of Need: Sharks programme, in association with Dyer Island Conservation Trust and Marine Dynamics, kicks off.
- SASC implements an internship programme designed to build capacity and knowledge within the marine science sector.
- Toshiba South Africa sponsors 3 new notebooks.

INSIDE SASC

- Steve Smuts, Capacity Development & Technical Officer, continues to develop the Green Marine Gillie Programme, re-training subsistence fishers to become responsible angling guides for the Overberg Region.
- Judian Bruk, a fisheries lawyer, joins the SASC Technical Advisory Committee as our fishery policy advisor.
- SASC granted a permit from MCM to become South Africa's first shark rehabilitation centre.
- Meaghen McCord begins weekly interviews on Whale Coast FM (96.0 FM) to discuss the conservation and management of sharks both locally and on a global scale.



Rescuing the smoothhound shark pups from Gansbaai. The pups are currently being rehabilitated in the SASC research centre

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- SASC joins forces with the Save Our Seas Shark Centre to implement an elasmobranch bycatch tagging programme in the False Bay trek net fishery.
- Online fishing forum, Sealine – South African Angling and Boating Community, acts as a voice for conservation.
- WWF Responsible Fisheries Programme and SASC roll out responsible fisheries training in South African fishing sectors.
- More on SASCs research programmes.
- Other activities at SASC.



Setting longlines on the MCM demersal shark research cruise in July 2008

SASC and the Save Our Seas Shark Centre to implement an elasmobranch bycatch tagging programme in the False Bay trek net fishery

The False Bay trek net fishery is perhaps one of South Africa's oldest fisheries. Targeting species such as yellowtail and kob, this fishery reportedly lands large amounts of elasmobranch bycatch in the nets. Although much of this bycatch is released, we remain uncertain of the impact of this fishery on local elasmobranch populations. To address this issue, SASC and marine biologist Alison Kock of the Save Our Seas Shark Centre will embark on a tagging programme early in 2009, enabling us to determine the residency, distribution and abundance of common bycatch species. We will also collect important biological data (e.g., sex composition, genetic samples) to improve our species-specific understanding of

elasmobranchs taken as bycatch in the False Bay trek nets. We are extremely pleased to have the full support and assistance of the False Bay Trek Net Association and monitoring authorities from the Table Mountain National Park. To ensure the success of this programme, however, we are currently soliciting additional funding to purchase operational materials and develop educational material. To learn more about this project, contact info@sharkconservancy.org.

Sealine – South African Angling and Boating Community contributes to conservation

As part of SASCs Green Marine Angling Programme we were encouraged by local anglers to join a popular online angling forum, known as Sealine, to become more familiar with our regional angling community. Sealine is South Africa's largest recreational angling forum, with over 5600 members, and is run by several keen conservationists. We were pleased to discover that most Sealine members are driven by conservation-based fishing ethics and are keen to contribute in some way to conservation initiatives. This was evidenced by the more than R5, 000 in donations we received from Sealine members when we began setting up our laboratory and rehabilitation centre, and the continued donations we receive on a monthly basis from several members. This forum enables us to keep in touch with the angling community and learn more about the characteristics of this important fishing sector. It also enables us to engage in debates on the value and importance of sharks and South Africa's marine ecosystems, assisting us in achieving the goals of our Green Marine Angling Programme. For more information, visit the Sealine forum at <http://www.sealine.co.za/> or <http://www.sharkconservancy.org/anglers.html>.



Over 100 anglers participated in the first ever Responsible Shark Angling Derby in Langebaan Lagoon

WWF Responsible Fisheries Programme and SASC roll out responsible fisheries training in South African fishing sectors

The WWF Responsible Fisheries Programme (WWF RFP) is committed to securing the health of marine ecosystems by: "...working with stakeholders to implement an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF), reducing the impacts of destructive and wasteful fishing practices, finding solutions to ensure smart and efficient fishing and raising awareness of fishing impacts on marine ecosystems" (WWF, 2009). And SASC has now joined forces with the WWF RFP to deliver their responsible fisheries training to several of South Africa's largest fishing sectors. The purpose of responsible fisheries training is to interact with fishers on the ground and provide them with the tools and knowledge to fish smarter. Each training session includes information about ecosystems, impacts of fisheries, bycatch mitigation measures, and fisher rights and obligations under South Africa's Marine Living Resources Act (1998). Sectors currently undergoing training include the tuna pole, pelagic longline and inshore and offshore hake trawl fisheries. Apart from fishers, compliance officials and fishery monitors also attend training. The WWF RFP training has been an incredible learning experience and has provided us at SASC with extremely valuable insight into some of South Africa's important fisheries.



Samantha Petersen, WWF RFP Programme Manager, delivers training to fishers from the inshore hake trawl fishery

More on SASCs research programmes

In the past year we began planning and implementing some exciting research initiatives. Some of the highlights for 2008 include the Zambezi shark expedition to the Breede River and our trip to Tanzania with the African Coelacanth Ecosystem Programme (ACEP). In 2009, SASC will continue to explore the ecological role of Zambezi sharks in the Breede River estuary, with a focus on the biodiversity, conservation and management of estuarine-associated elasmobranchs.

Also planned for 2009 is the implementation of our ecosystem-based long-term monitoring programme in Walker Bay, South Africa. In conjunction with the Dyer Island Conservation Trust (DICT), Marine Dynamics, the Save Our Seas Shark Centre (SOSSC) and MCM we will examine the population status and spatial dynamics of several shark species, including sevengill cowsharks, soupfin sharks and spotted gully sharks. Through their Faces of Need: Sharks Programme, DICT are helping raise funds to assist SASC in procuring some much-needed operational equipment such as tags and a hydrophone for tracking shark movement. The PADI Project AWARE Foundation also granted SASC R15, 000 to assist with the development and implementation of monitoring and educational material for this project. More funds are required, however, to make this long-term programme successful. If you would like to contribute to this programme, please contact meag@sharkconservancy.org.



A bull ray caught on the Zambezi shark expedition in February 2008

Other activities at SASC

2008

- Meag filmed an advert with Microsoft's "I'm a PC" campaign. Check out the link on [YouTube](#).
- Steve and Meag begin conducting weekly radio interviews on Whale Coast FM (96.0 FM). Tune in every Tuesday at 08h00.
- Meag asked to write a monthly conservation column for Fish Magazine. Her first contribution to the mag was in September 2008.

2009

- We begin the development of a seabird bycatch mitigation measure for South Africa's tuna pole fishery.
- Moonlight meanderings: a bi-monthly educational programme designed to teach local residents about the diversity of creatures found on our shores. For more information, contact steve@sharkconservancy.org.
- We continue planning and coordinating the first Southern African Shark Symposium, to be held in Hermanus, South Africa in 2010.
- SASC is searching for a dedicated Fundraiser for 2009 to help ensure the financial sustainability of our organisation. If you are interested in learning more about this position, contact info@sharkconservancy.org.
- Monthly seminars will begin at the SASC facility in February 2009. Evening seminars will be given by marine scientists and conservationists. Entry is free for SASC Members or R20 for non-members. All funds go toward SASCs research and outreach programmes. For information on the seminar series, contact steve@sharkconservancy.org.
- Steve begins research for a new book detailing the fishing history of Hermanus, a traditional fishing community. The book will provide insight into the status of our marine resources, past and present.



Shark fins being processed at a local fish processing plant.

WILL OUR ROCK LOBSTER RESOURCE SURVIVE?

By Steve Smuts

In this day and age of heavy exploitation of all our natural resources, whether commercially, recreationally or through uncontrolled poaching, we are facing a very bleak future!

West Coast Rock Lobster (*Jasus lalandii*) is no different, and unfortunately Marine and Coastal Management are unable to effectively police this important resource. In fact, against all findings by scientists, government went ahead and allocated "interim relief" rights in this sector to a further 1200 individuals. This after the official figures for the 2008\9 season demonstrated that commercial targets (allocations) were not met due to the dwindling resource.

In recent years there was an eastward migration of this species to east of Cape Hangklip, but this migration has now stopped and it is presumed the rock lobster is now returning to the west. Whatever the reason, there has been a steady decline in the resource in the last 4 years.

It was hoped the resource had moved into deep water, 50-200meters offshore, but after an extensive survey by MCMs Danie van Zyl, no lobster were found in the deep water from Cape Hangklip to Cape Infanta. This is very worrying as it was presumed that some of the stock would be found in the latter area.

Looking at a conservative estimate of poaching figures, it is thought that the cost to the resource is 500 metric tons per annum.

Can we afford this? I think not! Government will have to get its act together on the poaching issue, as well as addressing the huge unhappiness amongst the long-term rights holders about the treatment they receive from uninformed and untrained MCM compliance officials.

OTHER: FYI

A list of publications to date

This is a selection of publications, including popular articles, online reviews, scientific publications, and consulting reports. Also included are open source published projects in which SASC or one of our members participated.

Peer-reviewed publications

McCord, M.E., W.H.H. Sauer and O. Weyl. *Under review*. Preliminary assessment of a data poor shark fishery in South Africa. First submitted to the African Journal of Marine Science in August 2008.

McCord, M.E. 2005. Aspects of the ecology and management of the soupfin shark (*Galeorhinus galeus*). MSc thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa. ([Download PDF](#))

McCord, M.E. and S.E. Campana. 2003. A quantitative assessment of the diet of blue sharks (*Prionace glauca*) in Nova Scotia, Canada. Journal of Northwest Atlantic Fishery Science. 32: 57-63. ([Download PDF](#))

Consulting reports

McCord, M., W.H.H. Sauer and T. Shipton. 2008. Irvin & Johnson Marine Vertebrate Assessment. Prepared by EnviroFish Africa on behalf of CCA Environmental for Irvin & Johnson. ([Download PDF](#))

IUCN Species Survival Commission Shark Specialist Group Red List Assessments ([Download PDF](#))

- Caldas, J.P., M.R. de Carvalho, M.E. McCord. 2006. Colombian electric ray (*Diplobatis colombiensis*).
- Caldas, J.P., M.R. de Carvalho, M.E. McCord. 2006. Brownband numbfish (*Diplobatis guamachensis*).
- de Carvalho, M.R., M.E. McCord, J.J. Bizarro. 2006. Ocellated electric ray (*Diplobatus ommata*).
- de Carvalho, M.R. and M.E. McCord. 2006. Variegated electric ray (*Diplobatus pictus*).
- de Carvalho, M.R. and M.E. McCord. 2006. Shortlip electric ray (*Narcine brevilabiata*).

- de Carvalho, M.R. and M.E. McCord. 2005. Aden Gulf Torpedo (*Torpedo adenensis*).
- de Carvalho, M.R. and M.E. McCord. 2005. Leopard Torpedo (*Torpedo panthera Olfers*).
- McCord, M.E. 2005. Regional assessment for the Tope Shark (*Galeorhinus galeus*).

Online products

ARKive Images of Life on Earth species reviews for:

- [Blacktip reef shark \(*Carcharhinus melanopterus*\)](#)
- [Bronze whaler \(*Carcharhinus brachyurus*\)](#)
- [Sandbar \(dusky\) shark \(*Carcharhinus plumbeus*\)](#)
- [Sharptooth lemon shark \(*Negaprion acutidens*\)](#)
- [Shortfin mako \(*Isurus oxyrinchus*\)](#)
- [Tope \(soupfin\) shark \(*Galeorhinus galeus*\)](#)

African Marine Atlas ([Visit website](#))

Popular articles

- *Fish Magazine*. Ongoing monthly conservation column.
- *Shark Bytes*. Ongoing monthly series. Hermanus Times.
- *The Fishing Report*. Ongoing bi-weekly Afrikaans series. Hermanus Times.
- *The state of global elasmobranch fisheries*. February 2008. Tight Lines Magazine.
- *Reflections from a would-be shark biologist*. April 2007. Elasmodiver Magazine.

Memberships and Representations

- Scientific representative: Demersal Shark Longline Association
- Chondrichthyan Working Group
- Demersal Shark Management Working Group
- South African Linefish Ecological Risk Assessment Group
- South African Shark Ecological Risk Assessment Group

We extend a most special thanks to our sponsors for all the assistance this last year – without your support, none of our achievements would have been possible



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