EXPEDITION PROFILE

February 19th – 25th, 2019 aboard DISCOVERY Yacht Shredder

The International SeaKeepers Society teamed up with Beneath the Waves, Global Marine Travel, and Grand Isle Resort to conduct shark tagging aboard D/Y Shredder, as well as deploying new acoustic receiver technology. This was a part of the ongoing Beneath The Waves shark sanctuary study which consists of tagging sharks and collecting as much data as possible to assess how shark populations are thriving in the protected Bahamian waters. The project focuses on the benefits of sanctuaries and determining their effectiveness of conserving sharks over multiple years.

Dr. Austin Gallagher and his Beneath The Waves research team were joined by, SeaKeepers staff, and the crew of D/Y Shredder to conduct a series of shark tagging sessions in different sites throughout the Exumas. Two representatives from Vemco were present to assist with the deployment of their brand new acoustic telemetry equipment. What made this expedition unique was the addition of an educational component wherein guests staying at the Grand Isle Resort can join the boat for a full day of learning about shark research and conservation, while also getting a hands-on experience and participate in the actual process.

In addition to traditional "spaghetti" tags, researchers also implanted several acoustic tags, recorded morphological measurements, and took blood samples and fin clippings from the sharks, which will help scientists better understand the behavior and health of sharks in The Bahamas. The team also deployed two acoustic receivers around Great Exuma to monitor our tagged sharks over the course of the next several years, one of which is a new deep water receiver. It can be remotely released and floated to the surface in order to retrieve the data it has stored. Lastly, a highlight of this trip was the introduction of the newly developed data storage tag. While they can act in the same way as an acoustic tag which pings underwater receiver arrays to track an animal's migratory patterns, these new tags can store data with an onboard accelerometer to record the individual's body movements and velocity, water temperature, and other data which helps in the study of how sharks use and interact with their environment.

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