

# SHOTLINES

# Basking Shark Dies On Beach

IN THE LAST edition of **SCOTTISH DIVER** Mike Clark reported on the unusual event of a basking shark turning up in the bays around St. Abbs and Eyemouth. Unfortunately his story, of this very rare occurrence which gave pleasure to dozens of divers who took the chance to snorkel with the gentle giant, or just watch it from a boat, has an unfortunate sequel.

Mike reports:

"On October 5, 2007 three weeks after I first saw the shark I received a phone call from my wife to tell me that a Basking Shark had washed up on Fisherrow Beach in Musselburgh just 300 metres west of the town's harbour. At that stage the shark was still alive but the tide was dropping rapidly.

After five attempts to return the shark to the sea by the Scottish SPCA and volunteers from BDMLR (British Dolphin and Marinelife



Rescue), it became clear that something was wrong with the shark's radar as it kept turning around and re-beaching itself. There was nothing else to be done and the shark was euthanised by a specialist vet.

It was a sad end for a magnificent creature, which I am sure was the

same shark I had spotted three weeks earlier, judging by its size at around 3.3 metres and the rarity of sightings of such creatures in this area."

*Image above: beached shark at Musselburgh (courtesy Mike Clark Underwater Photos)*

## Shark Diving Open To All

WHEN SHARKS are about, most people get out of the water, but not disability sports ace, Jason Richards. When the British Champion heard that Oxford Hoist and St-Asaph based Healthcare Centre had donated a Dipper pool hoist to the famous shark tank at the Blue Planet aquarium in Chester, he couldn't wait to get over the side and shake fins with the world's fiercest fish.

The dive was arranged by Fraser Bathgate, Director of Training for the International Association for Handicapped Divers (IAHD). Fraser had trained with Blue Planet dive instructor Rob Bennett and had suggested to Oxford that donating a hoist would enable more disabled people to discover the value of diving.

Even though swimming had been Jason's first love as a five-year-old, there were a few poolside jitters.

"The hoist was the easy bit - then when I was in the water, I started thinking about the sharks. I've lined up at the World Championships a few times and felt nervous, but nothing like that!"

With Fraser on one side and Rob Bennett on the other, Jason slid into a world of giant sting rays and at least five different species of shark. At one point a nurse shark took a fancy to Jason and settled down next to him while the athlete stroked him.

After the dive, Jason was bursting to get back in the water again:

"That was simply brilliant. The sharks command an absolute presence as they swim past you. It's as if all they want is for you to respect that you are in their world."

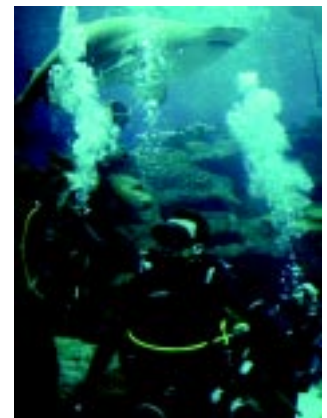
Anne Smart from the Healthcare Centre, who installed the Dipper hoist and provided initial training for staff, said that Jason's dive had been inspirational:

"Not all our clients want to swim with sharks but quite a lot want to either get in the swimming pool for fun or competition, or into a hydrotherapy pool for supported exercise or rehabilitation.

"What Jason has shown is that if you want it badly enough then access is available to all, regardless of disability."



*Jason, Paolo (dive technician) and Fraser*



*Fraser (left), Jason and Rob Bennett. Shark (top!)*

# Wildlife Snappers Top Award

IT IS that time of year again when we pay homage to the underwater finalists in the Shell Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition.

Held yearly, the competition is open to photographers of all ages and nationalities.

This year's winner in the Underwater World category was the image 'Giant Feast' by Felipe Barrio of Spain.

Felipe says: "I was woken by a huge crash against the boat in the Red Sea. It was a 10-metre-long young whale shark. Four other sharks then joined it, gathered below a school of sardines. We slipped into the water using snorkelling gear, and watched them feed, non-stop for three hours. They not only sucked up the plankton, but also the sardines' excrement. It was a fantastic experience."

There were three British photographers mentioned in the category: Alec Connah's image entitled 'Fish Roundup', Len Deeley's 'Big fish, little fish' and Patrick Weir's 'Red-lips' were all highly commended.

Connah's image was taken in Borneo and shows young blacktip reef sharks, seemingly herding small fish into the shallows while Deeley's portrait of shark and pilot fish was taken during a holiday to the Red Sea.

"I went diving in the Red Sea in search of sharks, and this silky shark came by, looking at me. Just as it made a close pass I shot its profile. The pilot fish was in front, its usual position, as if attached by an invisible wire."

In fact Pilot fish often swim in front of sharks, possibly to benefit from their protection, to 'bow ride' and to feed on scraps. A small one may even swim into a shark's mouth to nibble food between its teeth. They also ride in front of boats, hence their name. The shark rarely eats the pilot fish.

Patrick Weir's shot was not an easy one to capture as the red lipped blenny kept darting around making it extremely hard to follow with a camera. One second was all it took however, as the little fish paused to look at its assailant and was captured forever on film.

If you would like to enter the 2008 competition then watch the Natural History Museum website for entry details. Until then take some advice from one of this year's judges; Mark Carwardine advises you to create images that are technically sound but creative and fresh - he wants something that is going to stop him in his tracks as he searches through thousands of entries.

For inspiration why not visit the exhibition as it tours Scotland. It will be at East Kilbride from June 21, 2008 to September 14, 2008 at the National Museum of Rural Life, call 0131 2474377 or visit [www.nms.ac.uk](http://www.nms.ac.uk) for more information.

It will also visit Aberdeen from November 15, 2008 to January 04, 2009 at the Satosphere, call 01224 640340 or visit [www.satosphere.net](http://www.satosphere.net) for more information.



Patrick Weir's 'Red-lips'



Felipe Barrio's 'Giant Feast'



Len Deeley's 'Big fish, little fish'

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# New Device A Lifesaver For Divers

TECHNOLOGY THAT is traditionally used to communicate with underwater vehicles is now destined to help divers in distress.

Newcastle University, working with Cumbria-based Tritech International, has created 'DiveTrack', and have just won an international design competition set up in memory of a British diver. The award winning device enables divers to send a distress signal to the surface if they get into difficulty, allowing a boat crew to rapidly locate the diver and attempt a rescue.

This technology was originally developed for communicating with 'subsea' vehicles or instruments which explore and drill oil and gas fields below the ocean floor. It works by sending ultrasonic sound waves between the divers and a surface unit up to 800m away.

The DiveTrack technology is deliberately low cost and uses very little power. It is about the size of a small torch, takes normal alkaline batteries, and can be strapped onto a diver's arm. The batteries last for about two months, allowing emergency services to continue to locate divers some time after they go missing.

Jeff Neasham, senior research associate from the University's School of Electrical, Electronic and Computer Engineering, who led the development team said:

"It's very easy for rescue divers to miss somebody in the water, especially in poor visibility. By



*Diver with Dive Track device on sleeve*

accurately locating a diver in distress, this low cost device could be lifesaving.

"When the diver pulls the cord out, a distress signal is activated, an alarm goes off at the surface and a blinking LED lets the diver know that help is on its way.

"The surface unit then provides the boat crew with range information accurate to within a metre."

During testing with the British Sub Aqua Club (BSAC) in Scotland, divers several hundred metres away were pinpointed within minutes of setting off the distress alarm.

Further improvements to the product currently in progress include an underwater interface to enable simple text messaging. The device could also be connected to the diver's breathing apparatus to

alert the surface crew if any technical problems occur.

The team at Newcastle University has been developing a number of similar products with Tritech International over the past few years, all using underwater acoustic communication technology.

"This is undoubtedly the most exciting use of the technology yet, due to the difference it could make to so many people," said Mr Neasham.

The design competition was set up by the family of Penny Glover, who died with her dive buddy Jacques Filippi during a diving accident in 2005. The NU-Tritech team hopes to have the Divetrack product on the market early next year.



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