



EXPEDITION PROFILE

January 7th – 14th, 2019 aboard DISCOVERY Yacht Andiamo

The International SeaKeepers Society teamed up with Dr. Neil Hammerschlag and his team from the Shark Research and Conservation Program (SRC), as well as Dr. James Sulikowski of the Sulikowski Shark and Fish Research Lab. The team set out to find and identify pregnant tiger sharks and determine where and when they give birth using new technologies to ensure gravid females and the next generations are protected.

The research team consisted of Dr. Hammerschlag, Dr. Sulikowski, Assistant Director of SRC Steve Cain, shark biology students Alex Anstett and Hannah Verkamp, media specialist Paola Roldan, and Tony Gilbert of SeaKeepers. The Birth-Tag, a groundbreaking technology developed in part by Dr. Sulikowski is a novel intrauterine satellite tag designed to pinpoint the timing and location of pupping of highly mobile shark species. When it has been determined via ultrasound that a tiger shark is pregnant, she was then fitted with a finmount satellite tag and the Birth-Tag, which will be carefully inserted into her uterus where it will remain (inactive) until birth. At birth, this tag will be shed along with the pups, and become activated via light sensors to transmit a location to a passing satellite. While the team was able to gather data from ten different tiger sharks, we found three pregnant tiger sharks among them. In a few months' time, we should know, for the first time in history, where specific individuals are giving birth.

Conditions varied from perfect, to less than ideal. Taking advantage of those perfect conditions, as well as adapting and making the best of changing winds and seas are what made this trip successful. Additionally, long and hard days out on the water were rewarded by the exemplary hospitality and helpfulness of the crew of Andiamo, Captain Adrian Cushwa and Megan Seward. The expedition was a complete success, due in no small part to the unfailing determination and work ethic displayed by the research team and the crew.

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