



THE UPDATE

Captain's Blog



Great whites protected but not humans

Great white sharks are fearsome beasts.

Even so, pāua divers at Stewart Island over several decades have learned to co-exist with them.

That was until the balance was altered with the arrival of shark cage diver operators, who actively encourage the great whites with berley and baits.

That is altering the sharks' behaviour, according to locals, teaching them to associate boats and human activity with food.

That has meant prime pāua diving territory near cage tourism has been deemed too dangerous.

And schoolchildren at Oban, the island's sole township, now stay out of the water.

The shark cage venture has been highly contentious since it began operating in 2010.

The local pāua diver industry group, PauaMAC5, took legal action and was delighted when the Court of Appeal last year ruled shark cage diving an offence under section 63A of the Wildlife Act.

That led to one of the two operators pulling out, but Mike Haines' Bluff-based Shark Experience had continued to operate.

That gave paying customers the thrill of entering a cage at the stern of a vessel and seeing the great whites up close – at \$600 plus a pop.

But earlier this month the Supreme Court overturned the Court of Appeal decision in a confusing judgement that led the competing parties to different interpretations.

In the best traditions of the legal system, where lawyers are the only consistent winners, the decision is not definitive, throwing more doubt on the protracted process.

Pāua Industry Council chair Stormalong Stanley says it is not a victory for shark cage diving, as has been claimed.

“What the court said was that it could not make its own ruling on the legality or otherwise of caging.

“It stated that such a ruling could only be done by way of a prosecution.

“It also affirmed that the Department of Conservation, which administers the Act, cannot issue permits for shark caging.

“We are now looking to the Minister of Conservation, Eugenie Sage, to instruct her department to do their job and launch proceedings against anyone undertaking shark cage diving as soon as they receive information that protected great white sharks are being disturbed.”

Stanley was a professional pāua diver at Stewart Island for around 15 years.

In all that time in the water he never had a close encounter with a great white.

He saw several on the periphery of his vision but figured they were just curious and didn't see any evidence of aggression.

His fellow divers were similarly untroubled, although a couple had been circled by the big sharks, no attacks are recorded on pāua divers there.

They took simple precautions, avoiding diving at the change of light, and were usually in clear water and avoided seal colonies at the wrong time of year.

Great whites are now protected and are common in the cold waters around Stewart Island.

DoC shark researcher Clinton Duffy has identified at least 120 different great whites in the Foveaux Strait area.

The Wildlife Act is designed to protect rare and wonderful creatures like the world's most fearsome shark.

But who protects the humans in its habitat?

Shark Experience says it will be business as usual this summer. This means more winding up sharks with berley and bait again, without any consideration of others safety on and in the water nearby.

Meanwhile DoC's website continues to warn: “Their (great whites) large size, habit of feeding on large grey such as marine mammals and their propensity to investigate objects floating at the surface by biting them makes shark attack a potential risk for anyone swimming, diving, surfing or operating a small vessel (such as a kayak) in areas frequented by white sharks.”

And that is without encouraging them.

Seven-year mussel programme pays off

Results from SPATnz's latest greenshell mussel research could soon be worth \$200 million a year to New Zealand's economy*.

The seven-year breeding programme, developed in partnership with Sanford, Cawthron Institute and the Ministry for Primary Industries, has delivered fantastic results, finding selected hatchery mussels can grow twice as fast as those caught in the wild.

It took an average of just 16.7 months for the hatchery mussels to grow from seed to harvest size, compared to the standard 28.3 months of wild-caught varieties.

SPATnz programme manager Rodney Roberts said the biggest contrast was with Kaitaia mussels, a main seed source for the industry.

"The quickest of three hatchery strains halved the growing time of Kaitaia mussels in Marlborough, which is a pretty incredible result."

Roberts said the work is good news in respect to climate change too, in that selective breeding could be used to future-proof the mussel industry against threats like ocean acidification, global warming and disease.

The results could be a "game changer" for New Zealand's greenshell mussel industry, delivering benefits for mussel farmers, the economy and environment, MPI's director of investment programmes Steve Penno said.

"Faster growing mussels means more of this great product will be available to consumers both in New Zealand and around the world," Penno said.

"The latest growth rate results provide solid proof that we're on the right track, and what's possible through collaboration."

Sanford chief executive Volker Kuntzsch expects wide utilization of the spat could potentially increase sales in NZ's greenshell mussel sector by \$229 million a year by 2026, meaning greater employment, stronger regional economies and a thriving mussel industry with potential for growth.

"Sanford is already exploring the incredible opportunities in the nutraceuticals market. Greenshell mussels have proven anti-inflammatory benefits and this work will only enhance that. We have something very unique and exciting on our hands here," Kuntzsch said.

SPATnz and Cawthron are also focusing on other characteristics that selective breeding can promote, such as improving mussel quality and enhancing anti-inflammatory properties.

*BERL publication 2010, *Scenarios of the wider economic impacts in 2026 of the new generation shellfish industry.*



Image; Kono.

New Zealand Seafood Sustainability Awards

Fisheries New Zealand are calling for entries into the inaugural New Zealand Seafood Sustainability Awards.

The awards recognise individuals, industry, tangata whenua and communities who are dedicated to ensuring the sustainability of New Zealand's fisheries and aquaculture.

The award categories are as follows:

Operational Innovation Award

- Recognises those who have developed, invested in, or implemented an innovative product, tool, or method leading to more sustainable practice (such as catch efficiency, reduced by-catch, reduced waste, or full utilisation) within the last 24 months, or
- reduced their impacts on the natural environment through innovative practices.

Market Innovation and Value Added Award

- Recognises those who are leaders in driving market access and engagement, advancing customer experience, and furthering marketing effectiveness and accountability through smart technology and marketing process
- seize an opportunity to improve an existing market or product, or create a new product that is not currently available in the market and consumers are willing to pay for, or

- contribute to the improvement of handling or processing techniques leading to reduced waste, better use of low value by-catch and by-products from existing fisheries, and development of value-added products.

Kaitiakitanga Award

- Recognises those who demonstrate guardianship of the environment through spatial management, minimisation or mitigation of environmental impacts, or protection of vulnerable species (such as marine mammals, seabirds, inanga, tuna, or kōura), or
- make a significant contribution to the knowledge about sustainability that is held by our fishing and aquaculture communities or New Zealanders in general, through science and research, or education and engagement.

Supreme Sustainability Award

- Sustainability is the key objective of the awards programme and is applicable across the first three categories. All entrants in these categories will be considered for the supreme award.

Emerging Leader Award

- Recognises an individual who is under 35 years of age at 14 October 2019
- an emerging leader in New Zealand's seafood sector, and
- already making a significant contribution to the sustainability of fisheries or aquaculture.

Minister of Fisheries' Award

- Recognises an individual or group who are making consistent and regular contributions to New Zealand's seafood sector
- a champion of seafood sustainability or a developer of innovative methods or tools
- an exceptional commitment to responsible growth and best practice, or
- an outstanding contribution to New Zealand's reputation for high quality and sustainable marine products.

Entries close 5pm, November 24, 2019. The winners of the awards will be announced at a ceremony in Wellington in March 2020.

For more information on the awards, [to enter](#) or to nominate, visit [Fisheries New Zealand's website](#).

Ocean Bounty season three - Hoki

Hoki, New Zealand's largest commercial species by quota, are a fascinating fish. From fish fingers, to collagen and fish oil, to McDonalds' Filet-O-Fish burgers; hoki are a very important part of New Zealand's commercial fishing industry. Join the Ocean Bounty crew this Sunday, 5pm on TV Three to hear more.



News

The Department of Conservation's preliminary counts of hoiho show severe declines for nest numbers in locations in the Catlins and Bravo Islands, Rakiura. Other mainland sites have not shown the same decline. DOC southern South Island operations director Aaron Fleming said the 2018/19 breeding season was complex with two significant starvation events which have impacted this year's breeding population. "Despite the huge effort from rangers checking daily, and massive support from rehabilitators and veterinary services treating the underweight birds, the impact of the starvation events resulted in this low nest count," Fleming said. Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust general manager Sue Murray said the number of Catlins hoiho observed during the moult last season was low and a large number of these were breeding females which did not return to breed this year. The causes behind starvation events are complex and unable to be answered with certainty, but one possible event that occurred in November 2018 was a major flood, resulting in large amounts of sediment being discharged from Taieri and Clutha Rivers. Hoiho are visual hunters so murky waters make it more difficult to hunt prey. For the 2019/20 season, DOC and YEPT along with site managers have increased on the ground effort, with extra funding from Budget 2018, to ensure at risk adults and their chicks receive a high level of care.

Two Sea Shepherd boats have visited Timaru this week as part of a project to count Hector's dolphins, *Stuff* reported. Sea Shepherd spokesperson Michael Lawry said Operation Pahu is to help ensure the survival of Hector's dolphins. It is Sea Shepherd New Zealand's first official campaign of its kind. "The campaign will see Sea Shepherd New Zealand use their new vessel, the Loki, to patrol the south-eastern coast of the South Island to assist in the protection of the Pahu," he said. "By monitoring fishing vessels, as well as keeping an eye out for any illegal practices, Sea Shepherd New Zealand will be able to assist local scientists, government and enforcement in keeping an eye on these waters that play a critical role in the survival of the species." Lawry said the group would be

using science, community engagement and civilian monitoring of fishing activity through the operation to protect the dolphins before it was too late to save them. "Whilst at sea, we will also monitor Hector's sub-population numbers, collecting field data and contributing to the existing photo identification catalogue, held at the University of Otago."

Check out the latest Seafood Magazines

