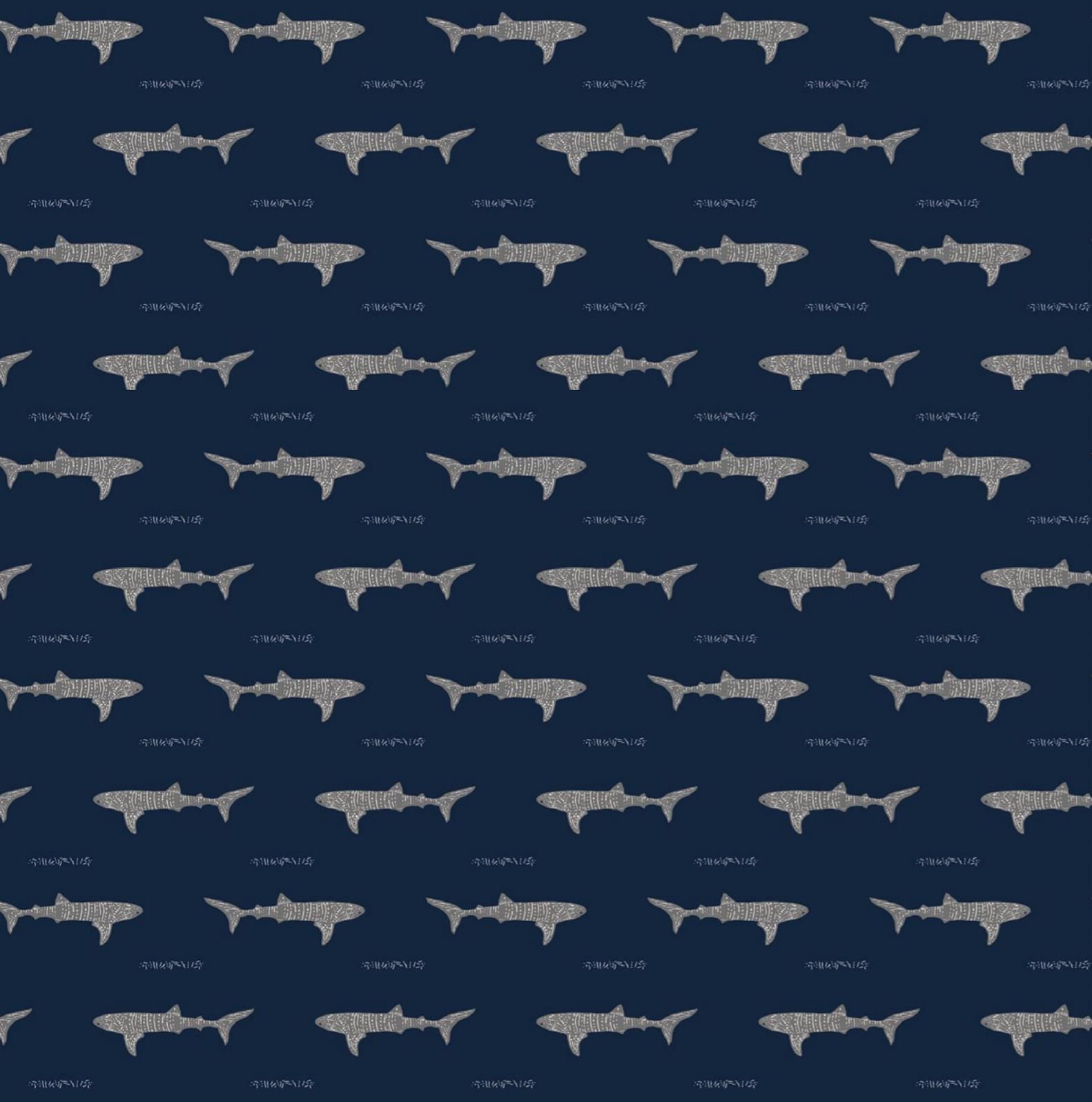


# PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS 2015-2016



SAVE OUR  
SHARKS



The Save Our Sharks team is looking back at a very successful year and a half of campaigning for shark conservation. Since kicking off in June 2015, we organized a myriad of activities and events reaching a continuously growing audience in the Netherlands and the Caribbean. There were press trips, radio and television interviews, tagging trips, and plenty of activities mixing fun with education. And all the while we accomplished both giant strides and small steps towards the level of protection that sharks so desperately need.

We hereby proudly present an overview of what we have accomplished so far, highlighting the great work by everyone involved in the project. Work that is made possible by the generous financial aid of the National Postcode Lottery, to whom we owe a debt of gratitude.

Tadzio Bervoets, *Save Our Sharks* project leader



## Introducing

The Dutch Caribbean waters of Aruba, Curaçao, Bonaire, Saba, St. Eustatius, and St. Maarten are home to an array of large shark species, such as whale sharks, Caribbean reef sharks, lemon sharks, tiger sharks, hammerheads, manta rays and eagle rays. All available evidence points to a strong local decline in shark numbers around the islands, which mirrors the dramatic decline of sharks globally. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) currently estimates that one-quarter of sharks and rays are threatened with extinction, largely due to overfishing and habitat loss. As large predators, sharks and rays are key contributors to maintaining the natural balance of the reefs, adding to their biodiversity and durable function. And sharks are not only important on a worldwide scale, they are important to the Dutch Caribbean in safeguarding the health of our reefs for future generations and important to the local community as a tourism asset.



The opening event in the Oceanium of Rotterdam Zoo Blijdorp. The audience was treated to shark feeding and Tako Rietveld and Whitney van Ommeren launching the Dutch translation of the book *'The adventures of Shark Stanley and Friends'*.



## KICKING IT OFF

In August of 2015, the Save Our Sharks campaign officially kicked off on the islands and in the Netherlands. The first introduction in the Netherlands took place in Rotterdam Zoo Blijdorp with an event in the captivating shark room of the Oceanium. After the project was formally presented to the audience, children's correspondent Tako Rietveld and queen of

the Rotterdam summer carnival Whitney van Ommeren hosted a book reading of the shark-themed children's book *Shark Stanley & Friends*. They read the story to a captivated group of kids from a local elementary school teaching them that sharks are important and not mindless dangerous animals.

# A special week for sharks

Every year, the entire Dutch Kingdom celebrates the beauty and importance of sharks during Dutch Caribbean Shark Week (DCSW). A multitude of educational and recreational activities for all ages are organized throughout the week simultaneously in the Netherlands and on the islands.

We can look back at two exciting weeks in 2015 and 2016, and have already set the dates for Dutch Caribbean Shark Week 2017!

## Dutch Caribbean Shark Week in the Netherlands

Shark enthusiasts or anyone that wanted to celebrate sharks with us had their pick from a wide variety of shark themed events. Children's activities in aquariums, informative cocktail parties, educational lectures, egg case hunts and pub quizzes; these were just a few of the many options available for those willing to participate and learn about sharks.



## Pop-up store and webshop

We combined world acclaimed Dutch design with shark conservation when we opened a pop-up store in Amsterdam's trendy De Hallen complex. All items on sale were shark themed or inspired and designed by young and upcoming designers. After the shop's successful weeklong run, the items continue to be available online in the webshop at [www.saveoursharks.nl](http://www.saveoursharks.nl). The collection comprises jewelry, home accessories, t-shirts, and bags.

Kanagawa Beach Bag by Studio MolaMola



## Island activities

The activities organized on Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, St. Maarten, and St. Eustatius included high level events attended by politicians and officials, trivia quizzes, treasure hunts, parties, sports events, performances, art shows, book readings, and an exceptional amount of classroom lectures; all within the theme of shark conservation and education. Both locals and visitors joined in on the festivities, often accompanied by live music and amazing food.

The popular singer Tio Ali from Curaçao produced a song called *Konservá Tribon den Karibe*, which he performed live during one of the events. Shark dives were organized on St. Maarten, resulting in some spectacular photos. And Bonaire managed to host the official Dutch premiere of the movie *White Shark 3D*.



## #Sharkstrong

We claimed the hashtag #SharkStrong to help spread our message on social media by asking people to tag all messages related to DCSW and Save Our Sharks. Dozens of people shared pictures with the specially designed #SharkStrong banner. The continuing use of the hashtag in social media posts has given the campaign a strong online identity.



***Save Our Sharks is proud to be supported by two wonderful ambassadors:  
Jörgen Raymann and Felipe Saelmans***



*Jörgen Raymann snorkeling in the waters of Bonaire*

Popular in both the Netherlands and the Caribbean, Jörgen Raymann is a stand-up comedian and media personality who's popularity proved to be invaluable to raise awareness about sharks on both sides of the ocean. He has a strong bond with the ocean and with the Dutch Caribbean islands and was eager to become and advocate for sharks through our campaign.



*Felipe advocating shark conservation*

At only eleven years old, Felipe Saelmans entered the WWF Ranger Action for Healthy Corals and was chosen campaigner of the year winning an expedition trip to Bonaire. That trip made him realize the importance of healthy corals and he decided he wanted to make a personal contribution. Soon after, he started his own foundation *Sea & Land Wonders*.

Both ambassadors visited several events during Dutch Caribbean Shark Week to help raise awareness and generate publicity.

“ Being the ambassador for Save Our Sharks has made me growingly aware of the importance of sharks for the ecosystem. They are often killed because of a bad image, ignorance, and unwarranted fear. But by taking away the sharks, humans are destabilizing the life in the oceans, thereby jeopardizing their own existence.

~Jörgen Raymann



# REACHING OUT



## Duikvaker

The Duikvaker is one of the biggest dive fairs in the Netherlands and a must-visit for any diving enthusiast. At this year's edition, we launched the shark conservation petition asking all attendees to sign for shark protection in the waters of the Dutch Kingdom. At our stand, we showcased the wide variety of sharks in both the North Sea and the Caribbean. Hundreds of enthusiastic visitors asked questions about shark biology, conservation, and diving with sharks. In addition, we hosted a two-day lecture series on the fair featuring presentations about sharks, the Save Our Sharks project, and research conducted as part of the project.



## Grachtenfestijn

The Grachtenfestijn is a maritime festival in Groningen that celebrates the history of the city whilst promoting a sustainable lifestyle. Save Our Sharks was invited for the 2016 edition to educate people about shark conservation in the Dutch Caribbean. One of the event's organizers is Rockin' Ludina brewery, an artisanal beer brewer that supports the Save Our Sharks campaign by serving their locally produced Jaws2 shark beer.



## Online

www.saveoursharks.nl is our hub for everything related to the project. The website is fully available in two languages and is constantly updated with information about the project, sharks, news, and blogs.

The Save Our Sharks newsletter features the latest news regarding the project and associated shark conservation news. Every issue is available in Dutch and English.

Save Our Sharks also has a constantly growing following on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.



## Petitioning for sharks

Save Our Sharks launched a petition calling for better protection of sharks in waters of the Kingdom of The Netherlands. The petition asks for three important pillars of shark conservation: the strengthening of legal instruments and implementation of concrete protective measures in all waters of the Dutch Kingdom, a ban on shark finning on Saba, St. Eustatius, Aruba, and Curaçao, and improved international protection for sharks in the wider Caribbean. The Save Our Sharks

team with help from some zealous volunteers have been going out into the streets, to festivals, zoos, schools, and dive organizations to collect signatures and raise awareness of the need for shark conservation. Thousands of people have signed the petition sending a strong signal to policymakers that these magnificent.



# Shark Science



## BRUV

Because we can't easily see beneath the surface, which makes it hard to figure out what swims around there, researchers install cameras on the bottom of the oceans with bait in front of it to attract sharks. This is called Baited Remote Underwater Video (BRUV) monitoring. After leaving the cameras out for several hours, researchers can tell from the footage what species occur in the area. All six Dutch Caribbean islands are monitored for the occurrence of sharks using this technique.

« *Deploying the underwater cameras for the monitoring program*



## Shark tagging

Shark tagging is a pivotal first step in determining how sharks use our waters and is essential for the improvement of management and protection. The process usually entails catching the animal and placing a tag, or transmitter on the dorsal fin, or with a small incision in the abdominal cavity. Different tags and transmitters give different data, such as location, depth, temperature, swimming speed, and motion. The Save Our Sharks Expedition 2016 went out at sea for two weeks tagging tiger sharks with satellite tags. This allows us to track the movement of these highly migratory sharks throughout the region. The expedition was filmed for a documentary that will be featured on television on the Discovery Channel in 2017.

« *A tiger shark (*Galeocerdo cuvier*) being held alongside the boat before it was tagged and safely released.*

## FACT!

**Half of the people in the Netherlands swim with shark without even knowing it. Results from our survey show that not many people are aware of the occurrence of sharks in the North Sea, even though the beaches along the Dutch coast are popular summer spots.**

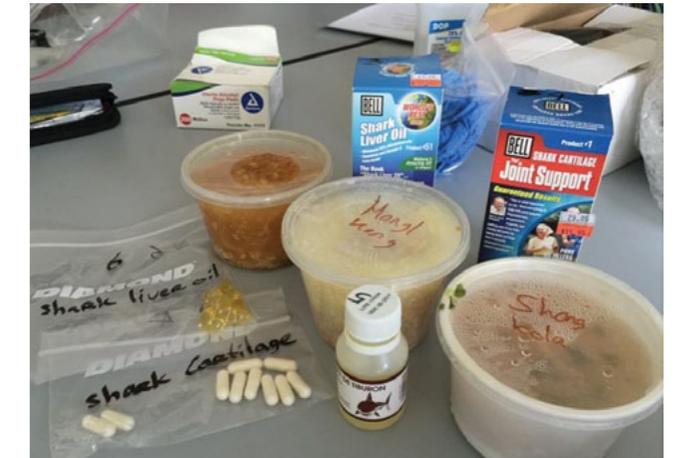


## Market sampling

Project officers on different islands explored the market for shark products by investigating the sale of shark products. Their search resulted in finding a range of articles such as shark fin soup, shark steaks, liver oil, cartilage pills, ray wings, and shark oil. On top of that, analysis on genetic samples from these products will elucidate what species the products are made from and whether it is possible that they come from locally caught fish. Additional genetic samples were taken from restaurants selling fish with a similar taste and texture as shark meat to expose possible mislabeling of shark meat in restaurants.

## Telemetry

Acoustic tags transmit a unique sound signal (called a ping) that identifies the individually tagged animal when it is within range of a receiving instrument that listens for the signals. These tags can provide data on environmental characteristics that the tagged animals experience, such as depth and temperature. A hydrophone receiver picks up sound signals created by the tags and converts them to data that researchers can use. Multiple Caribbean reef sharks, juvenile tiger sharks, and nurse sharks were tagged around the Windward Islands to study their movement and habitat use, and the first data have already been processed.



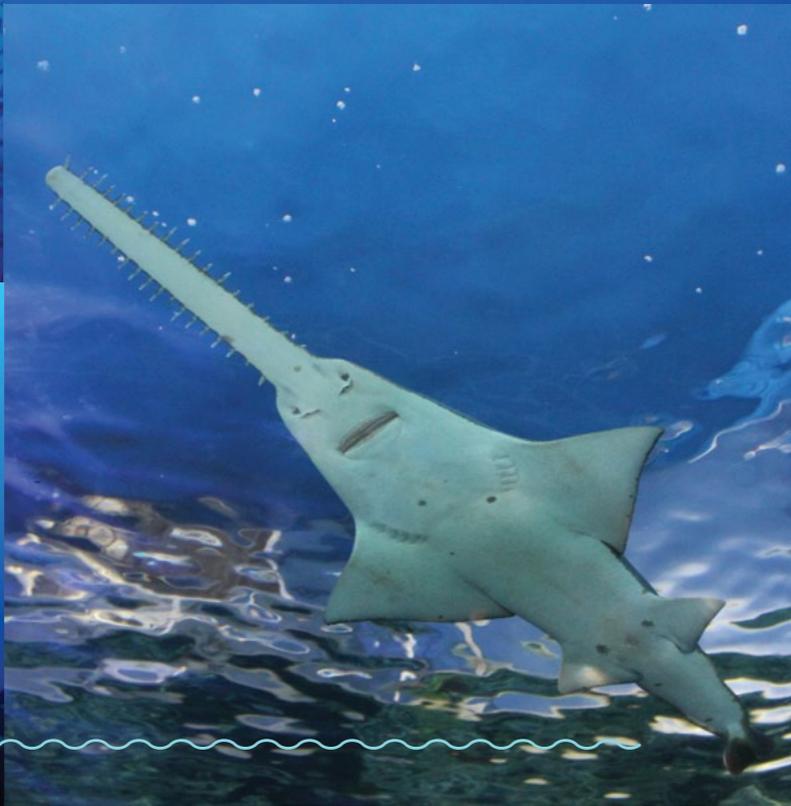
## Survey

Save Our Sharks commissioned students from Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences to conduct a survey among 400 people in the Netherlands asking them how much they really know about sharks. The results were shared with, and covered by various media. You can also find the results on the Save Our Sharks website.

## Scientific conferences

Throughout the project, members of the Save Our Sharks team presented at several scientific conferences and symposiums including the annual meetings of the American Elasmobranch Society (AES), the European Elasmobranch Association (EEA), and the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI).





# Policy accomplishments thus far

The purpose of the Save Our Sharks project is to stop the decline of shark populations around the Dutch Caribbean islands by having in place effective management. This management should be based on sound scientific research that is relevant to the area, species-species, and enforceable. The reasoning behind it should be clear to those affected and involved through communication and education. The constant great effort from the Save Our Sharks team led to a lot of progress since the beginning of the project, from full local protective measures to essential first steps towards regional management.

Marine parks were already established around most islands to protect the marine environment but few of them specifically protect the shark and rays. Bonaire was the first island to introduce legislation to protect sharks; in 2010 it adopted a list of protected species, which included all sharks and rays. Sint Maarten protected all the sharks inside their marine park in 2015 with a temporary ban on all shark fishing.

## Yarari Shark Sanctuary

The next landmark event came in October 2015 when Dutch State Secretary, Sharon Dijksma, announced the establishment of the Dutch Caribbean's first shark sanctuary. Known as the Yarari Marine Mammal and Shark Sanctuary, it encompasses the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of Bonaire and Saba, including the prestigious Saba Bank. The Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs is preparing a Management Plan for the sanctuary, which will include regulations to prohibit purse seining, gill-netting and long-lining, as well as targeted commercial fishing for sharks and rays, and particularly the removal and sale of fins.

## St. Maarten Shark Sanctuary

In June 2016, St. Maarten's Prime Minister announced the inclusion of St. Maarten's waters in the Sanctuary with a prohibition on all commercial shark fishing. The Government of Curaçao simultaneously announced its commitment to shark conservation and vows to establish legislation to protect sharks in its waters within the year. If the Dutch Caribbean jurisdictions of St. Eustatius and Aruba follow suit, the entire Dutch Caribbean could soon be recognized as a regional shark sanctuary.

## SPAW

An important first step was taken this November towards the regional protection of sharks throughout the Caribbean. At the request of the Netherlands, regional governments recommended eight species of sharks and rays for protection under the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Protocol. Delegates from 14 Caribbean countries including Caribbean Netherlands (Saba, St. Eustatius and Bonaire), Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten met in Miami, Florida in November 2016 to discuss the protection of nature and biodiversity under the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Protocol. This is the only legal instrument for cross-border protection of wildlife in the Caribbean. The recommendation is an important first step toward permanent inclusion of these sharks and rays on the SPAW protocol. In May 2017, a final vote will ratify the protection for these species.

« Image left: The whale shark, oceanic whitetip shark, hammerheads, sawfish, and manta rays were proposed for listing under the SPAW protocol.

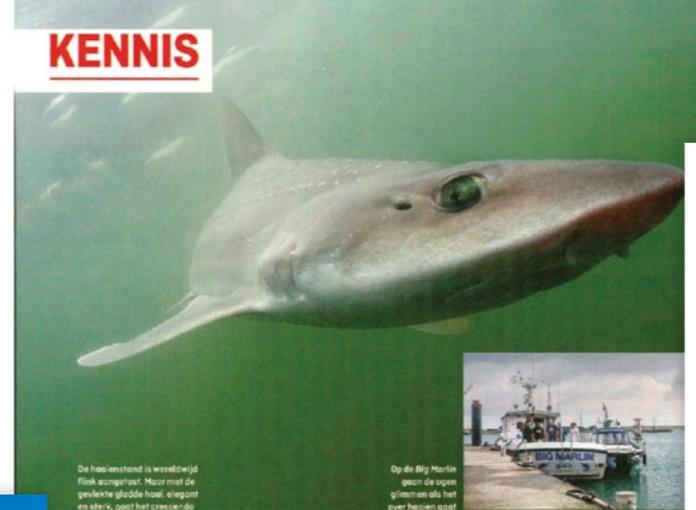


# MAKING HEADLINES

## Ongoing media outreach

We've made sure to continuously inform media about all our activities, both in the Netherlands, as well as on the islands. We sent out press releases, and organized media events and press trips. Our efforts resulted in regular features on radio and television, in printed media, online articles, blogs, and countless social media mentions.

Koffietijd, Jeugdjournaal, Eén tegen 100, Vroege Vogels, Elsevier, Trouw, National Geographic, Quest, The Daily Herald, Amigoe, NOSTV, TeleCuraçao; these are just a few of the names that helped us share our story! The total reach exceeds 17 million; more than the entire Dutch population!



**KENNIS**

**Yes, we hebben een haai!**  
**BIOLOGIE** / Het wemelt van de gladde haaien in de Nederlandse wateren. Elsevier mocht mee op jacht en ving een joekel. Jaws in de Oosterschelde.



**BLOG / BONAIRE / CURAÇAO / NATUUR / ST. EUSTATIUS**

**Meer bescherming voor haaien in de Cariben**

door Save Our Sharks op 19 juni 2016

Sinds een jaar hebben we in Nederland ook een week die helemaal in het teken staat van haaien. Vanaf 18 tot 25 juni zijn er zowel in Nederland zelf en op de Nederlandse Antillen diverse activiteiten en acties georganiseerd om aandacht te vragen voor haaien in de Caribische wateren van Nederland. Als onderdeel van de 9-daagse perisels voor Save Our Sharks langs de Nederlands-Caribische eilanden was de eerste stop Sint-Maarten een driedaags symposium plaats georganiseerd door de PEW Charitable Trusts in samen met de oprichter van de Virgin Group en met de Sint-Maarten Nature Foundation. Tj zouden wetenschappers, natuurbeschermers en overheden van de verschillende eilanden een betere bescherming



**RAYMANN KOMT OP VOOR UITSTERVENDE HAAIEN IN DE CARIBBEAN**

**RAYMANN KOMT OP VOOR**

May 28, 2016 · BusinessNews+ · 0 Comments



**Comedian Raymann to promote sharks project**

THE HAGUE--Popular comedian Jörgen Raymann is the new ambassador for the Save Our Sharks project in the Dutch Caribbean, it was announced on Friday. Raymann will visit all islands next month during Dutch Caribbean Shark Week.



**ARUBA / BLOG / BONAIRE / CURAÇAO / NATUUR / ST. EUSTATIUS**

**Grote stappen voor de Caribische haaien**

door Save Our Sharks op 10 juli 2016

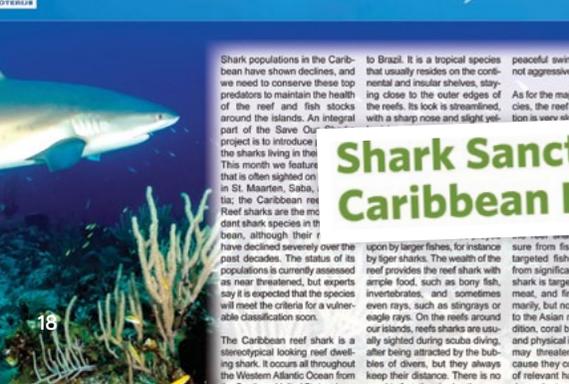
De Dutch Caribbean Shark Week zit erop, blogger Guido Leurs is weer thuis na een haaien-trip langs de eilanden en maakt de balans op. Wat is er bereikt en waar valt nog veel te doen?



**RAYMANN KOMT HAAIEN REDDEN**

rtl4

Ron van der Veer  
natuurbeschermmer



**Shark Sanctuaries Announced Around Dutch Caribbean Islands**

Shark populations in the Caribbean have shown declines, and we need to conserve these top predators to maintain the health of the reef and fish stocks around the islands. An integral part of the Save Our Sharks project is to introduce the sharks living in the Caribbean reef. This month we feature that is often sighted on St. Maarten, Saba, and the Caribbean reef shark. Reef sharks are the most abundant shark species in the Caribbean, although their numbers have declined severely over the past decades. The status of the reef provides the reef shark with ample food, such as bony fish, invertebrates, and sometimes even rays, such as stingrays or eagle rays. On the reefs around our islands, reef sharks are usually sighted during scuba diving, after being attracted by the bubbles of divers, but they always keep their distance. There is no pressure from fisheries, both from targeted fisheries, as well as from significant bycatches. The shark is targeted for its liver oil, meat, and fins, which are primarily, but not exclusively, sold to the Asian market. And in addition, coral bleaching, disease, and physical impact on the reef, may threaten the sharks because they could lead to a loss of relevant habitat for the reef.



**AMIGOE**

connected with the Caribbean," said Raymann in a press release of the Save Our Sharks project, explaining that the shark is under pressure from fisheries, both from targeted fisheries, as well as from significant bycatches. The shark is targeted for its liver oil, meat, and fins, which are primarily, but not exclusively, sold to the Asian market. And in addition, coral bleaching, disease, and physical impact on the reef, may threaten the sharks because they could lead to a loss of relevant habitat for the reef.



**AD**  
Antilliaans Dagblad



**npo radio**

Comedian Jörgen Raymann (right) is the new ambassador for the Save Our Sharks project in the Dutch Caribbean. At left, eight-year-old Felix van der Veer, shark lover and fan of Raymann.

## PRESS TRIPS

### Island hopping

In the summer of 2016, we invited a group of Dutch media to join the activities of Dutch Caribbean Shark Week. They visited five of the six participating islands where they met with local celebrities, children, fishermen, conservationists, and scientists. This led to numerous great articles helping us to put the plight of shark conservation on the map even more firmly.

The trip started in St. Maarten to visit a three-day symposium organized by the Sint Maarten Government together with the Nature Foundation Sint Maarten, the Pew Charitable Trusts, and Sir Richard Branson. Government representatives, scientists, and conservationists from various Caribbean nations met to discuss better protection of sharks.



### Tagging trip Oosterschelde

The Dutch Save Our Sharks team joined a charter boat in Zeeland for two days in July and August of 2016 to fish for, and tag sharks for a study about shark migration in the North Sea. Youth ambassador Félipe Saelmans, a scientist from Wageningen Marine Research, representatives of the DCNA, the Postcode Lottery, the Dutch Angling Association, and a select group of journalists accompanied the team on the excursions. The trips provided a great opportunity to show everybody what the tagging process entails and how research can contribute to improving management measures.



Through the fishing trip, Dutch journalists got acquainted with the science underpinning shark conservation and it was covered broadly in magazines and on the radio.

⌘ A common stingray (*Dasyatis pastinaca*) that was caught in the Oosterschelde

⌘ A starry smoothhound (*Mustelus asterias*) that was caught, tagged, and safely released back into the water



1. *Waiting to depart Bonaire for an amazing sundowner snorkeling trip. We spotted a ray!*
2. *Sir Richard Branson thanking attendees of the symposium on St Maarten*
3. *Kayaking through the restored mangrove forrests of Curaçao*

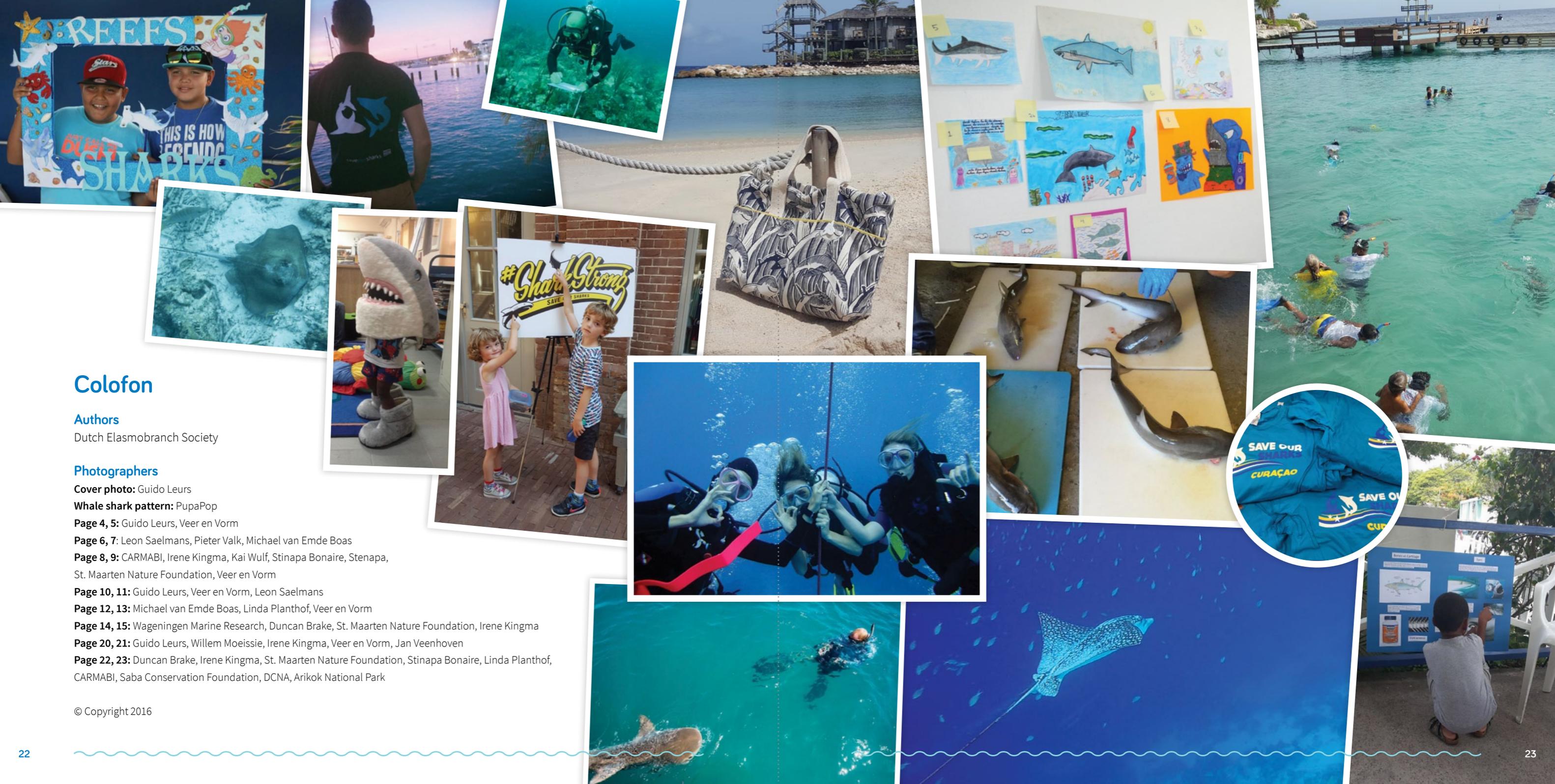


## AND MORE TO COME

A film crew from *Vara Vroege Vogels*, one of the most prominent nature shows on Dutch television, visited the Dutch Caribbean in November of this year. They were there to record footage for a full episode about the Save Our Sharks project that will be aired on national television in December.

**And of course we will continue to inform and entice the media in 2017 and onwards!**





## Colofon

### Authors

Dutch Elasmobranch Society

### Photographers

**Cover photo:** Guido Leurs

**Whale shark pattern:** PupaPop

**Page 4, 5:** Guido Leurs, Veer en Vorm

**Page 6, 7:** Leon Saelmans, Pieter Valk, Michael van Emde Boas

**Page 8, 9:** CARMABI, Irene Kingma, Kai Wulf, Stinapa Bonaire, Stenapa, St. Maarten Nature Foundation, Veer en Vorm

**Page 10, 11:** Guido Leurs, Veer en Vorm, Leon Saelmans

**Page 12, 13:** Michael van Emde Boas, Linda Planthof, Veer en Vorm

**Page 14, 15:** Wageningen Marine Research, Duncan Brake, St. Maarten Nature Foundation, Irene Kingma

**Page 20, 21:** Guido Leurs, Willem Moeissie, Irene Kingma, Veer en Vorm, Jan Veenhoven

**Page 22, 23:** Duncan Brake, Irene Kingma, St. Maarten Nature Foundation, Stinapa Bonaire, Linda Planthof, CARMABI, Saba Conservation Foundation, DCNA, Arikok National Park

© Copyright 2016

Save Our Sharks is a project led by the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance aimed at reversing the decline of shark populations in the waters around the islands of Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Sint Maarten, Saba, and Sint Eustatius.

Within the Save Our Sharks project, the marine parks on all six Dutch Caribbean islands work towards raising the importance of shark conservation in the public eye and on the political agenda, and towards obtaining the scientific data that is necessary for the implementation of protective management.

The goal is to work with fishermen, local communities, and scientists to decrease the mortality of sharks in local fisheries, whilst increasing the awareness about the importance of sharks to coastal communities and encourage the islanders to benefit from their presence as a valuable tourism asset.



Mogelijk gemaakt door

