Grey Nurse Shark Submission

Australian National University Scuba Club (ANUSC)

The ANUSC regularly dive the south coast of NSW where two critical habitats have been identified, namely, Tollgate Islands, Bateman’s Bay and Montague Island. We also dive up the north coast, where sites such as the Solitary Islands are a regular feature in our dive calendar.

Like many other dive clubs we have noted the decline in the numbers and localities of Grey Nurse Sharks, even in their critical habitats.

The new rules regarding dive behaviour in the vicinity of the critical habitats include:

- No scuba diving between sunset and sunrise;
- No blocking entrances to caves or gutters when the sharks are there;
- No feeding or touching the sharks;
- No chasing or harassing the sharks;
- No electronic shark repelling devices; and
- No underwater scooters.

We are concerned that although most divers are environmentally aware and look forward to seeing Grey Nurse Sharks and other endangered species, there are some whose attitude and training leave much to be desired.

In order to ensure that these rules are applied and adhered to by all divers and snorkellers, we suggest the following:

- enhanced education as to the issues, rules and regulations, these could be included in dive courses
- all dive operators visiting the sites should encourage adherence to the rules, even to the extent of signing a pledge. We believe that this may ensure that divers/snorkellers take the issue seriously.
- a limit be applied to the distance that divers and snorkellers can approach sharks, in order to ensure there is no confusion to what is and is not allowed.

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