

## **La Riviera Maya has *Miracle Sharks!***

For decades people have been deeply afraid of sharks because of the movie JAWS. It has inspired irrational fears in three generations of people around the world. But the movie was based on sensationalized lies. Sharks are not like the monster in the movie. Sharks have inhabited the seas of the world for 350 million years basically unchanged. They are evolved into perfection. An animal that has reached this level of perfection is not a monster, it is a master of life.

I love sharks! I look at sharks like most people look at the family pet dog and cat. They are individuals with unique personalities, intelligence and attitude.

My best friend in the sea for over 20 years was a Great White Shark named 'Spots'. Spots was 16 feet long, 3,500 pounds and very sweet. When I saw her each year I was filled with joy and millions of people around the world have seen Spots on TV usually with me riding on her back and scratching her head. Even though she was famous and people all around the world knew her, she was killed in April 2012 for her fins by a Mexican fisherman in Loreto, Baja. He sold her fins and jaws for about \$1,000 dollars and in doing so...deprived the world of a sweet creature that everyone knew. My friend Spots is dead and I miss her terribly. What I learned from her death is that few people in the world have the heart to save my friends, the sharks.

The grim reality is that **200,000 sharks are killed each day** for Shark Fin Soup... and that does not include those killed for other markets and those killed by 'sport' fishermen. As of today, it is predicted that most sharks will be extinct in less than 7 years. We are entering a world where the most perfectly evolved creature in Earth history will be gone and it because because of us... and very, very quickly.

This is where La Riviera Maya can lead the world and make a lot of money doing it! Right off the beaches of La Riviera Maya are beautiful Bull sharks... one of the last populations of this size on earth. This species is being hit HARD by shark fishermen and are nearly extinct from soulless over- fishing.

I refer to these Bull sharks as "The Miracle Sharks of La Riviera Maya" for two reasons.

**First:** They are a true blessing not only because a wonderful Mexican Undersea Explorer named Marcos Mier (my hero!) of Dive Balam (located at Royal Resorts) has 'calmed' these magnificent shark into being gentle and playful giants...

**Second:** because they are worth a fortune each to the Mexican people!!! 100s of thousands of people travel each year just to see sharks! The Bahamian Tourism Board determined that each Shark off their coast is worth over one million dollars each to the economy... and the Palau, Australia determined their sharks are worth two million dollars alive (EACH!)

<http://reefbuilders.com/2011/05/02/million-dollar-sharks/>

Also, sharks are vital for reef health and eating invaders that could destroy the natural balance... and Cancun has a serious invader. Lion Fish are newly introduced to Mexico and have exploded to unprecedented numbers and are eating the babies of every fish Mexican fishermen catch! Mexican reefs are facing serious threats of complete devastation by the lack of sharks and the invasive Lion fish. With Cancun and Cozumel being lucrative diving destinations as well as sport fishing destinations for tourism... loss of these reefs would be an ecological disaster to the Mexican people and their government.

In a report, released 17 April 2012, found that shark diving driven by the tourism sector earned the Fijian economy more than US\$42 million in 2010, of which US\$4 million went to local communities in the form of salaries and local levies.

<http://www.scidev.net/en/south-east-asia/news/shark-diving-promotes-coral-reef-conservation-.html>

So, the bottom line is three simple points:

1. Sharks protect reefs. Without them, reefs die as does all the fish that live on them.
2. Sharks are worth millions of dollars the Cancun economy alive!
3. Fishermen that kill sharks rob the economy of MILLIONS of dollars and should be considered thieves.

Luminox and I are planning to return to La Riviera Maya this winter with the Undersea Voyager Project's submersible, *Great White*, to perform a population census of the local Mexican sharks including the ***Miracle Sharks of La Riviera Maya***.

Marcos and the divers at Dive Balam, Royal Resorts are leading the world in Bull Shark conservation and I will do everything I can to support their heroic efforts. The ***Miracle Sharks of La Riviera Maya*** are a blessing and should be embraced as such! If they are, Mexico will be heralded as leaders of marine protection, eco-sustainability and ecotourism. Truly, Mexico can lead the world on saving one of the most incredible shark species on Earth!

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