

Adopt a Shark Program St Maarten

The St Maarten Nature Foundation launched the “Adopt a Shark” program during St Maarten Shark Week in June 2018, but due to the continued demand of adopting a shark the Foundation decided to extend the program up to the end of this year.

“It is important that we work together to ensure the survival of our shark population, with the ‘Adopt a Shark’ program we are trying to engage the community in our efforts to protect sharks and give them the opportunity to be involved in a large scale scientific research project on St. Maarten. We certainly think this a great opportunity for kids and people interested in science to learn more about research, sharks and marine life on St. Maarten” stated Nature Foundation’s Project Officer Melanie Meijer zu Schlochtern.

Different tags are being applied on adopted sharks; such PIT tags, FLOY tags and even high-tech acoustic tags have been deployed on certain sharks. A PIT tag is a microchip which gives us a unique live time barcode and a Floy tag is used to identify the shark by anyone who catches or sees the shark close-up. An acoustic tag sends out acoustic signals which are detected with acoustic receivers, thereby giving information on how much time the shark spends around a certain location, providing us valuable information about their movement patterns. DNA samples will provide information about the sharks its relationships and their length measurements provide the knowledge about the ages and growth of the sharks.

“By donating a contribution to the Nature Foundation you can adopt a St Maarten shark, you will receive a certificate of adoption and can decide on the name of the shark. As soon as the shark is tagged updates and pictures about the shark will be sent to you. With the support of ‘Adopting a Shark’ we can continue our shark research and tagging activities, we will learn more about the sharks in our waters, providing us the knowledge to better protect them” explained Melanie Meijer zu Schlochtern.

Worldwide sharks are the most misunderstood species on the planet as they are repeatedly displayed as villains and being dangerous; however they are actually the victims of humans poaching, finning, overfishing and coastal development activities. Worldwide over 100 million sharks are killed per year; as a result half of all shark species are threatened or endangered. Sharks, as top predators, play a crucial role in maintaining balance and health within our aquatic ecosystem. Besides, they are important for tourism; many divers would like to see sharks, which makes a shark worth more alive (\$200,000) than dead (\$50).

The ‘Adopt a Shark St Maarten’ Program is part of the DCNA’s ‘Save our Sharks’ project funded by the Dutch National Postcode Lottery.



Professional freediver Guillaume Jorakhae with adopted and tagged tiger shark 'Yvje'.

Photo by: © Melanie Meijer zu Schlochtern

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