



# News from...

## Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

### Shark Research in the Ten Thousand Islands

Fisheries biologist Pat O'Donnell has been monitoring shark populations in the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve since 2000. With the help of trained volunteers, O'Donnell is comparing the relative abundance of sharks in three very different bays of the Ten Thousand Islands on a monthly basis.

Fakahatchee Bay, on the eastern edge of the Reserve's 110,000 acres, is a relatively natural system which serves as a "control" site. It is basically unaffected by the Southern Golden Gate Estates canal system that is being restored by the South Florida Water Management District.

The Faka-Union Bay is altered by an abundance of surface and ground water draining from the canal system. The drainage system is simultaneously reducing freshwater flows into Pumpkin Bay to the west, resulting in elevated salinity levels there.



scalloped hammerhead and Atlantic sharpnose. These two individuals were both caught in Fakahatchee Bay on the same night.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer and possibly participating in this study, email [donna.young@dep.state.fl.us](mailto:donna.young@dep.state.fl.us) or call (239) 417-6310 ext. 412.



Using a combination of carefully monitored gill nets and long lines, O'Donnell has consistently found five species of sharks using these bays as nurseries: bull, bonnethead, lemon, black tip and nurse sharks. In Faka-Union bay there is a relative abundance of bull sharks, whereas the presence of sharks in Fakahatchee and Pumpkin bays is variable depending on time of year and luck of the draw. Captured sharks are weighed, measured, tagged and released.

While long-term monitoring is generally not designed for making new discoveries, in July O'Donnell's gear did reveal two new shark species not caught in his study ever before:

### National Estuaries Day Saturday, Sept. 24

Celebrated each year at the country's 28 national estuarine research reserves, National Estuaries Day offers people an opportunity learn about our beautiful and important coastal environments, where the rivers meet the sea.

All events take place or originate from the Environmental Learning Center. Enjoy **half-hour boat tours** through the Reserve (space limited, available on first-come, first serve basis, must be 48 inches or taller to go on the boats), half-hour **guided kayak trips** along Henderson Creek (must be 12 or older and meet height and weight requirements; under 16 must be accompanied by an adult), tours of the **science labs**, marine critters **touch tank**, guided trail walks, face painting, **and other activities**. Admission to National Estuaries Day is \$3 for ages 13 and older, \$2 for ages 6-12 and free for under age 6 as well as members.



### Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center September 2011 Events

#### Special Deals!

Through Labor Day, enjoy \$1 off with valid Florida driver's license or "buy one, get one free" with valid Collier County driver's license. Max 4 per offer, excludes events.

#### Thursdays (9 to 11 a.m.)

**Guided Kayak Tours.** Pre-registration required.

#### Sept. 8 (5-6:30 p.m.)

#### Opening Reception for 3rd Annual Family and Friends of the Estuary Exhibit

Enjoy artwork by Rookery Bay staff, members and volunteers, on view Sept. 6 through Nov. 11. The theme this year is: "Where in the Reserve?" Light refreshments will be served. Free.

#### Sept. 12 & 13

#### Workshop: Water Words That Work

Make a splash with your communications. Join nationally renowned speaker Eric Eckl as you learn to transform professional language into action language and make your next educational or fundraising campaign a success. \$75, registration required.

#### Sept. 15 (6 to 8:30 p.m.)

#### Ecotour Training Series: Invisible Pollution & Seafood Safety

Ecotour operators, guides and the general public are invited to learn how to create more positive experiences for visitors and encourage sustainable tourism practices. Find out if you're "Smarter than a Stone Crab" with Sea Grant agent Bryan Fluech.

#### Sept. 24 (10 a.m. to 3 p.m.)

#### National Estuaries Day

**Pre-register for events at [www.rookerybay.org](http://www.rookerybay.org)**

Summer hours: Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Admission: \$5 adults, \$3 kids 6-12, under 6 FREE.  
Daily programs offered at 11 a.m. & 2 p.m.

Rookery Bay Reserve, located in southwest Florida, is recognized as one of the few remaining pristine, mangrove-forested estuaries in the U.S. The Reserve is managed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). As one of 28 sites within NOAA's National Estuarine Research Reserve System, Rookery Bay serves as an outdoor classroom and laboratory for students and scientists from around the world. (239) 417-6310, 300 Tower Rd., Naples, FL 34113 (located off Collier Blvd. 1 mile south of U.S. 41/East Tamiami Trail). [www.rookerybay.org](http://www.rookerybay.org), [facebook.com/friendsfrookerybay](https://www.facebook.com/friendsfrookerybay)