

Dal students scare up money for sharks

BY ERIN SPERLING,
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Believe it. Some of the fiercest animals on the planet are in trouble. According to the White Shark Research Institute (WSRI), sharks are in danger of extinction, and if we don't take the time to understand the mysteries of these giant beasts, they may disappear.

The WSRI is a nonprofit agency located in South Africa. To date, much of the WSRI's work has been fairly localized in terms of education and outreach programs. This has been due to the limited amount of funding that has been available.

Here in Halifax, a group of Dalhousie students are getting involved to raise money for the WSRI. Nine students in a third year biology course, Nature Conservation, have chosen this group as their cause of choice. They are being supported in their efforts by the Dalhousie Association of Marine Biology Students (DAMS). Together the two groups are organizing a benefit concert for the sharks. Emily Black is a member of the Nature Conservation group and Cameron Curtis is on the DAMS executive.

When asked how they came up with the idea for a shark benefit concert, the answer was somewhat roundabout.

"When we were first talking about it, I wanted to have a Plumtree concert... then [Emily] said [she] had to do a Nature Conservation project and I said, 'Marine Biology can use the [Grawood] for free, so you can do a concert in conjunction with us if you find a cause' and [she] said 'yes'. And I said 'I have a perfect cause for you,'" said Curtis, DAMS co-sports rep.

At present the focus of the WSRI is to raise funds to increase conservation measures and biological studies on an international level, including the use of satellite tracking, camera attachments and DNA analysis. All the work done by the Research Institute is "Natural Biological", as stated by their website, which means that all work is conducted on free swimming animals.

"[The WSRI] is focussed within South Africa, and we did look for research around here, but there is no

one working on sharks around here," Black said.

This cause is important for many reasons.

"White sharks are endangered and there is very little research done on them, and as a local issue they have been implicated in the cod fishery

"The sustainable harvest of any resource is fine...when they catch them and cut off their fins and stick them up as prizes, that's killing for no reason and is a complete waste."

[collapse]. They are natural predators of the seals," Black said.

There is an operating shark fishery, as parts of sharks bring in a lot of money in the marketplace.

"Some people eat the actual meat or shark fin soup. The sustainable harvest of any resource is fine; the unsustainable killing of sharks, like when they catch them and cut off their fins and stick them up as prizes, that's killing for no reason and is a complete

waste. I don't think that there can be a sustainable harvest with great whites, maybe with [other species of shark, such as] porbeagle, makos and blue sharks," Curtis said.

One of the entertainers for the benefit concert is musician Rich Terfry, who goes by any of thirteen stage names, including Buck 65, Johnny Rockwell and Stinkin' Rich. He received a Biology degree from SMU.

"I studied sharks quite a bit at school and I was fascinated — I always have been. I'm glad to return the favour. Sharks are a pretty important segment of life on this planet. Between them and sponges, they're the only things that don't get cancer.

I think that we can learn a lot from them," Terfry said.

Other acts which have committed their time and energy to the shark cause include Al Tuck and a friend from Plumtree, Mis Bliss and the Six Million Dollar Men. The funds that will be raised through their generosity, the compassion of the organizers and the money from ticket sales will go to a good cause.

"It's \$1200 US to adopt a shark so

any extra money we have after that, [we would like] to put aside for Eco Action, for them to use on shark research [locally]. The incentive will be there because the money will be there," Black said.

"And there's going to be an information table [at the concert and there will be] pamphlets on the tables and chairs," Curtis added.

The WSRI has contacted Curtis and Black to say that they are extremely pleased with the group's efforts to spread their message of conservation and education.

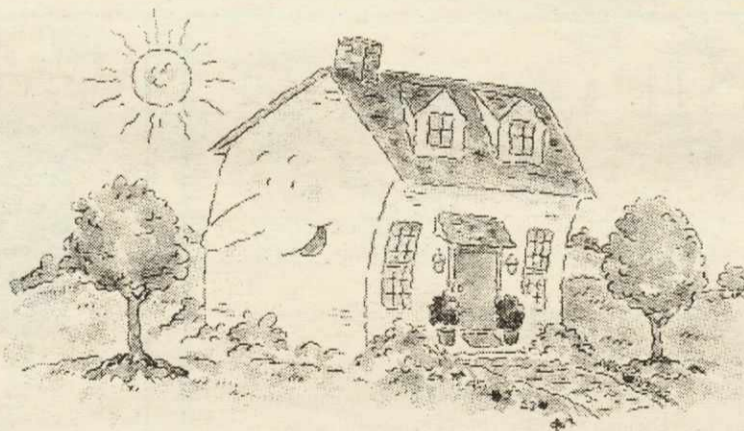
"On behalf of our organization and all the sharks out there we want to sincerely thank you for your efforts," said the WSRI in an E-mail sent from South Africa.

The Great White Shark Benefit Concert will take place on Saturday, March 28 at the Grawood in the Dal SUB. Tickets are \$5 in advance from the DAMS office, room 2114 of the LSC, or \$6 at the door. The doors open at 8pm.

For more information about the White Shark Research Institute and its projects, check out their website at <http://www.whiteshark.co.za/>

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