

## LIFE&amp;TIMES PEOPLE

# Simply say 'no'

Delve into the world of sharks at the Save Our Fins exhibition and learn how these endangered creatures are harvested for their fins, writes **Aneeta Sundararaj**



"Fish are friends, not food."

Bruce The Great White Shark in Finding Nemo

"I AM a nice shark, not a mindless eating machine. If I am to change this image, I must first change myself. Fish are friends, not food," so says Bruce, the Great White Shark in the animated box-office hit *Finding Nemo*. Bruce is trying desperately to become a vegetarian.

If his predicament touches you and you'd like to learn more about sharks, Aquaria KLCC has created a unique exhibition. Save Our Fins explains a great deal about these misunderstood creatures.

The exhibition begins with the Shark Parade, an introduction to the "mysterious and fascinating world of sharks".

For the last 450 million years, sharks have been adapting to a changing world and four of the species have been featured on a wall of fame, of sorts. The first is the Great White Shark, which is now endangered. Then there's the Bull Shark, which is known to be unpredictable in their movements and often use a "bump and bite" technique to catch their prey. Also spotlighted is the Hammerhead Shark, highly migratory and known to form large schools for courtship and mating. Last to be featured on this wall is the shark most unique to Malaysia — and one of the five rarest in the world — Borneo River Shark.

#### THE CRUELTY OF MAN

Comfortable that you've made the acquaint-



Although no more than **15 humans** could be killed by sharks each year, over **100 million sharks** die unnecessarily at the hands of man

ance of sharks, albeit from afar, proceed to the next zone which is the Seabed Shocker.

This part of the exhibition takes place inside a unique tunnel where fish are swimming above you. While the marine life is awesome, all emotion is tinged with immense sadness when you learn just how cruel man can

be. In particular, the parts of the exhibit called Huge Bait and Carcass Hill explain how large fishing hooks are specially designed to catch sharks, fin them and then toss them back into the sea where they're left to starve to death or be eaten alive.

As the name suggests, the Body Works

#### Spot The Sharks contest

THE Shark Pool at KLCC Park is featuring artificial fins based on a variety of shark species. In addition, Aquaria KLCC is running a Spot The Sharks contest. You have to identify the artificial fins in KLCC Park and follow the clues at Aquaria KLCC and the Shark Pool.

**Grand prize:** 3 x RM500

**1st prize:** 3 x Cage Rage package

**2nd prize:** 3 x Sleep with Sharks package

#### Where:

Concourse Level, Kuala Lumpur

Convention Centre

Tel: 03-23331888

Website: [www.aquawalk.com](http://www.aquawalk.com)

zone teaches you all about the anatomy of sharks. For instance, the skin of adult sharks is about 10cm thick. Their mouth can be 1.2m wide and can house up to 350 rows of teeth. Sharks have well-developed night vision with upper and lower eyelids that do not move.

Next, learn about their internal organs and how they function. For instance, sharks have two types of skeletal muscles: first is what's called red muscles. They have a good supply of blood which allows sharks to swim slowly for long periods of time without becoming tired. The white muscles don't have much blood supply and are only used when sharks are chasing their prey.

Then, do not be deterred from viewing the following exhibit because of its name — Jaws and

Fins. Keep an open mind and you'll learn that, except for their jaws, sharks have a skeletal structure made up of cartilage. The predecessor of the modern shark is a beast called the Megalodon. It is now extinct, which is precisely why you'll only see a depiction of it in the zone called Seeking the Extinct.

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**PLEDGE AND SIGN**

BEFORE you leave the shark exhibition, you'll be asked to sign a pledge to stop eating shark's fin soup. Do remember that although no more than 15 humans may be killed by sharks each year, over 100 million sharks die unnecessarily at the hands of man. You can also sign this pledge at The Body Shop outlets, on the Aquaria website and Aquaria Facebook page.

Here are some of the pledges from visitors to the Save Our Fins exhibition:



**DR SHEILA GHARPURAY, 72, FROM INDIA**

"I liked Aquaria as it's very well laid out. I learned about the Megalodon shark, which is approximately seven times heavier than an African elephant. I have tried shark's fin soup and, no doubt, it's delicious. However, now that I know how cruel it can be to harvest their fins, I will be more comfortable if a substitute is used. Even if it causes offence to my hosts, I will say 'no' to shark's fin soup from now on."

**SUSAN FAWLEY, 43, SCIENTIST, AND PAUL STEPHEN, 43, A MECHANICAL ENGINEER, FROM UNITED KINGDOM**

"We didn't know this much about sharks. The Sand Tiger Shark has over 3,000 teeth at one time and has over 30,000 teeth in its lifetime. That's a lot of teeth. Never tried shark's fin soup. If someone suggests we try it, we'll just say 'no'. The time has passed to be polite. If people still insist, we will stand our ground and try to educate the person on the cruelty attached to finning."



**SITI NURSHYAFIQA ROSELI, 14, FROM SMK AGAMA PEREMPUAN AL MASHOOR, PENANG**

"I used to think that sharks were big and dangerous. Now, I realise that they are tame, and, becoming extinct. They are fish that have a unique shape and size. It's man who threatens the shark, not the other way round. We abuse them, eat their fins then throw them away. It's a waste. I've never eaten shark's fin soup. Now, I never will. I'm afraid that the next generation will only see these animals on the Internet or the TV, not in the wild."



Spot the fin

**First Dorsal Fin**

Located on the top of a shark's body, just behind its head. It is this iconic fin that is seen out of the water.

**Second Dorsal Fin**

This keeps a shark upright and prevents it from tipping or rolling over.

**Anal Fin**

This is situated between the Pelvic and Caudal fins. It is used for stability while swimming.

**Pelvic Fin**

This is located in front of the Anal fin and provides further suitability for a shark when it's swimming.

**Pectoral Fins**

Located behind the head on both sides of the body, these fins are used for balance, navigation and to prevent a shark from sinking. This is because a shark cannot move by using its tail alone. Instead, it needs to move its entire body from side to side.

**Caudal Fin**

This is also known as The Sail as it moves from side to side in order to propel a shark's entire body forward. The nature of this fin does not allow for backward movement. If a shark needs to move away from an obstacle, it'll either drift backwards or turn away and continue forward in a different direction.



**BALKIS ABDUL RAHMAN, 16, FROM SMKAYER HANGAT, LANGKAWI**

"I've been to Aquaria KLCC before but I never knew this much about sharks. I've eaten sup ikan yu (shark's fin soup), but after this, I won't."

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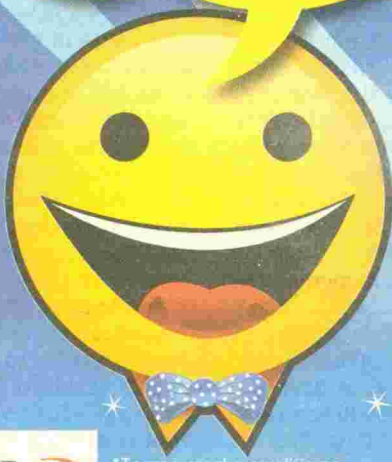
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