

Picture-perfect trip

Famed artist, conservationist catches dolphin and swordfish while in Islamorada

BY STEVE WATERS STAFF WRITER

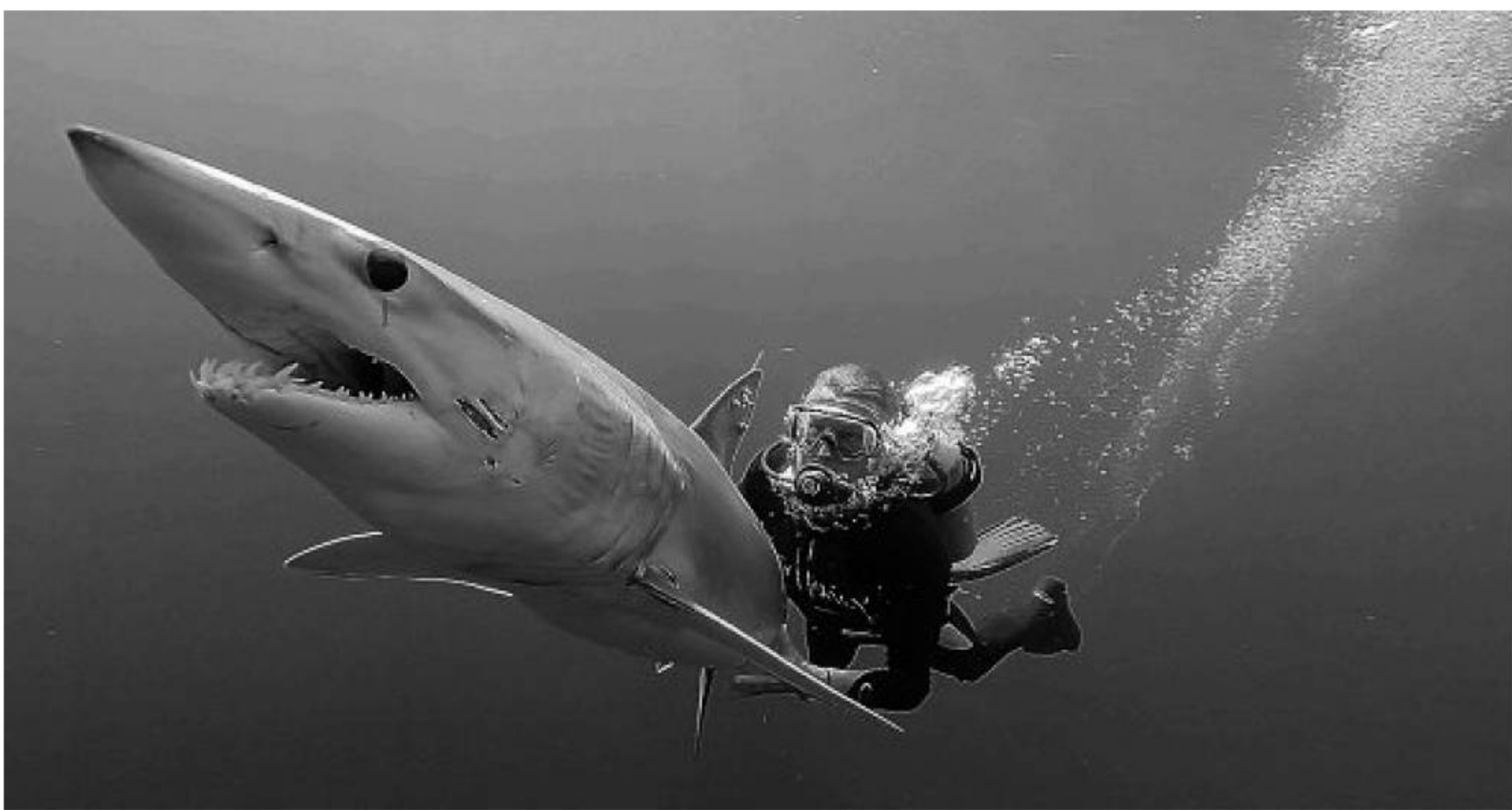
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STEVE WATERS/STAFF PHOTO Guy Harvey fights a swordfish as Capt. Vic Gaspeny looks on. Harvey promotes shark tagging research to better manage sharks throughout the world.



COURTESY PHOTO

Guy Harvey swims with a mako shark after it was tagged on its dorsal fin and released. “It’s about being responsible and taking the lead and trying to make a difference,” Harvey said. “They have been so extensively killed that their populations have been significantly reduced.”



STEVE WATERS/STAFF PHOTO

Many of Guy Harvey’s fishing trips are focused on tagging mako, tiger and other sharks with transmitters to yield data that will limit the commercial take of the slow-growing, long-lived creatures.

ISLAMORADA — With a doctorate in marine zoology and a gift for drawing and painting fish, birds and mammals, Guy Harvey is combining his love of science and art these days to help sharks.

The popular wildlife artist, whose work appears on everything from murals and posters to clothing and coffee cups, is busy through the Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation spreading the word about the importance of protecting sharks throughout the world.

Every once in a while, though, Harvey gets to just go fishing. He was in Islamorada earlier this month for the dedication of the impressive Trophy Lounge at the Islander Resort. The landmark hotel, which was refurbished without losing its Florida Keys feel or look, was dedicated as a Guy Harvey Outpost in November.

The Outposts, which are also in St. Petersburg, Mexico and the Bahamas, emphasize eco-tourism and feature Harvey’s artwork throughout the grounds.

The day before the lounge dedication, Harvey went fishing out of Bud N’ Mary’s Marina on Catch 22 with captains Richard, Scott and Nick Stanczyk and Vic Gaspeny, who all pioneered daytime swordfishing in Florida.

The plan was for Bill Boyce, the host of the “IGFA Anglers Digest” TV show, to catch a swordfish for an episode on the outdoors activities in the area. If that went well, then maybe Harvey would get a chance to reel up a swordfish from the bottom of the ocean.

*“[Guy Harvey] has a very genuine and sincere desire to help preserve the ocean and the fish that swim in it.”*  
*Richard Stanczyk*

After catching dolphin on the way to the swordfish grounds, some 40 miles from the marina, the captains discussed where to make the first drop. Their decision resulted in a 100-pound swordfish that Boyce caught and released on rod and reel. A couple of drops later, the rod tip twitched ever so slightly, the sign of a swordfish bite 1,800 feet below the boat.

Harvey climbed into the fighting chair, was handed the rod and skillfully reeled the fish up from the depths as Boyce’s cameraman shot video.

Within 20 minutes, the swordfish, which was similar in size to Boyce’s, was next to the boat. Harvey decided to release the fish because it had not yet reached spawning size, which is approximately 125 pounds.

Although he’d caught swordfish before, the artist was inspired.

“I’m going to go home and paint a couple of swordfish just because I’m so fired up,” said Harvey, who lives in the Cayman Islands.

The following evening at the Trophy Lounge, Harvey told those who gathered for the dedication that the trip ranked as one of his 10 best.

Richard Stanczyk was equally impressed by Harvey.

“He has a very genuine and sincere desire to help preserve the ocean and the fish that swim in it,” Stanczyk said. “The other thing I was quite taken by, I realized he spends half of his time painting. His heart is there. He’s the real deal.”

“I paint every hour of the day when I’m home,” Harvey said. “I’m a madman.”

But Harvey is not home as much as you’d think. His travels involve appearances to promote his merchandise, business ventures and to educate politicians about marine issues.

Many of his fishing trips are focused on tagging mako, tiger and other sharks with transmitters to yield data that will limit the commercial take of the slow-growing, long-lived creatures.

“It’s about being responsible and taking the lead and trying to make a difference,” Harvey said. “They have been so extensively killed that their populations have been significantly reduced.”

He said some states, like Florida, and some countries, such as the Bahamas, have restricted or prohibited the killing of sharks.

The tagging program has already had an effect. Harvey was part of a tagging effort for oceanic whitetip sharks in conjunction with a dolphin tournament in Grand Cayman. A \$1,500 reward was offered to the first couple of tournament anglers who caught a shark and held it for tagging.

Six sharks were held and tagged and Harvey and his crew caught and tagged four others.

“What was cool was the guys who caught the first two sharks gave the money back so we could buy more tags,” Harvey said. “All of a sudden, we turned around the Caymanians’ attitude toward sharks. Usually they kill sharks and use them for bait.”

Known as SPOT tags — Smart Position and Temperature — Harvey said they cost \$1,800 each plus the cost of satellite time to retrieve the data from the tags.

The tags are bolted on to a shark’s dorsal fin, then the shark is released. Harvey jumps in the water to swim with the shark until it takes off. The experiences often result in new paintings of sharks.

“He loves it. It’s a combination of fishing, diving and his science background,” said Dr. Mahmood Shivji, the director of Nova Southeastern University’s Guy Harvey Research Institute and Save Our Seas Shark Research Center, who has a website — [nova.edu/ocean/ghri/tracking](http://nova.edu/ocean/ghri/tracking) — that displays the sharks’ travels. Some of the findings have been enlightening and, ideally, will lead to better shark management.