

Beth Taylor Marine Environmental Management Summer Placement 2013



Cayman Islands Summer 2013 brought me more 'firsts' than any other summer – first trip to the Caribbean, first dives without needing a wetsuit, first taste of plantain...but most importantly – my first ever encounter with SHARKS.

My experience began with one week on Grand Cayman, to collect equipment and food supplies, and meet everyone who worked at the Cayman Islands Department of Environment. Although this week was a necessity, I was itching to get to Little Cayman and begin the research project. A few days later, we had landed on Little Cayman via a 10 seater twin prop plane (not for the faint hearted!). We unpacked and began preparations for building the survey tools (such as baited remote underwater video systems (BRUVS)).

Before any surveying of the Island could take place we had to participate in training sessions with our supervisor, Dr. Mauvis Gore (Marine Conservation International) who taught us the essentials in shark handling, survey protocols and species ID (including sexing and aging sharks) for the scientific long lining, BRUVS and scuba distance sampling techniques that we would be utilising throughout the 2 month project. All in all, this placement has equipped me with both practical skills and theoretical knowledge and understanding, necessary for any future research project. I have learnt the importance of working under tight time constraints, within budgets, and in sometimes uncomfortable conditions – all whilst maintaining an amiable character and good team spirit.

With a new fascination in elasmobranchs, I hope to pursue future research in this field, combining my love of practical based field work with community outreach and information dissemination.