

Tiger shark hooked off Big Island resort

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□ The Mauna Lani consulted with the state's Shark Task Force on the catch

By Rod Thompson

Big Island correspondent

MAUNA LANI RESORT, Hawaii — The South Kohala coast is a bit safer these days with the catch last week of a 14-foot female tiger shark in the waters off Mauna Lani Resort.

The shark was first seen swimming offshore about two weeks ago, said Mauna Lani spokesman Gordon Chapman. As sightings continued, the resort consulted with the state Shark Task Force, which said it would probably be wise to catch the shark.

The resort set out a line attached to a buoy and bagged the fish on Thursday, he said. It weighed in at 1,400 pounds. Nicks or bites out of the tail showed it was the same shark sighted a week before, he said.

Sea Life Park shark expert Steve Kaiser, notified of the catch yesterday, lamented a lost opportunity to study the female shark. Kaiser, also a member of the state Shark Task Force, has been trying without success to hook a female tiger off Oahu and would have welcomed the rare chance to examine the blood and ovaries of this one.

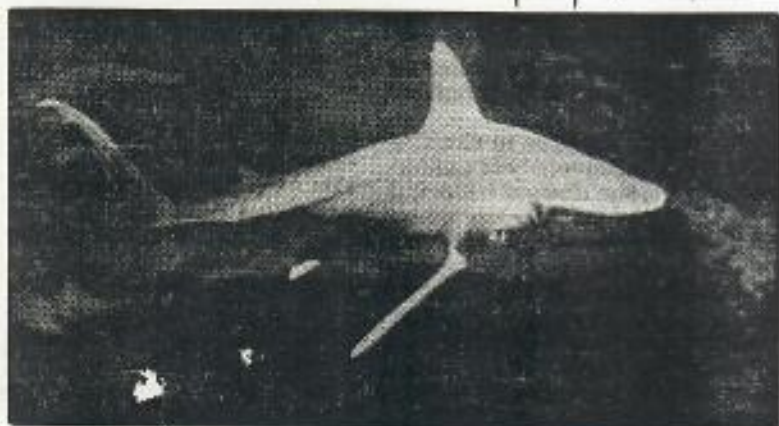
The meat went to hotel employees, the skin to a hotel employee's father who makes Hawaiian drums. The shark was carrying 54 pups, about 4-6 weeks away from birth and all too young to live on their own. Some of the dead pups will be studied at the Waikiki Aquarium, Chapman said.

The resort consulted the Shark Task Force because it is aware that some people consider sharks to be their aumakua, or family gods, Chapman said.

"We know the sensitivity of the issues."

But with four hotels in the immediate area, it was considered a safety hazard.

"It was a big shark and we're happy we could catch it," he said.



By Dean Sensul, Star-Bulletin

Sharks like this were caught off Oahu and the Big Island last week.

Sea Life Park snags young one for tank

By Harold Morse

Star-Bulletin

Sea Life Park has a 4-foot tiger shark, caught with hook and line off Windward Oahu, in its tanks.

Steve Kaiser, park curator of fishes, said the shark was caught Friday. "It just started eating today, so it looks like a keeper." Kaiser said he thinks the shark is no more than a year old.

A female tiger shark caught earlier this year was released because it failed to do well in captivity. That shark was over 5 feet long and was caught with a hook and line off Waipahoehoe Feb. 13. It was set free after three days at the park.

Sea Life Park has been tagging and releasing sharks "so we can determine whether they're terri-

torial or moving all over the place," Kaiser said.

"We've got about 25 tags out. We really need to get 300 tags out."

He said tiger sharks in captivity are rare.

"There's no (other) tigers in captivity right now in the U.S.," Kaiser said. "There was one being kept for a while in Australia. This is certainly the smallest one that I have ever seen. If it's young enough, it adapts just that much easier in captivity."

It's too early to tell whether the shark will thrive, Kaiser said. "We have to give it just about a full week."

Marine biologists hope to study the shark's habits, diet, blood chemistry and growth rate.

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Curator of fishes, Sea Life Park

-Harold Morse