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**OCEAN CONSERVATION PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS ANNOUNCED**

**Sharks Highlighted in Winning Photograph**

WASHINGTON, DC—SeaWeb’s Marine Photobank today announced the winners of the fourth annual *Ocean in Focus* conservation photography contest. Photographers from around the world submitted their most compelling images illustrating human impacts on marine ecosystems, as well as images that inspire hope for ocean health. The *Ocean in Focus* grand prize is awarded to Terry Goss, of San Francisco, California, for his photograph of a blue shark off the coast of Rhode Island with a rusted hook protruding from its lower jaw.

“Photography is an impactful storytelling tool to illuminate and connect viewers with issues that are difficult to envision, such as those beneath the ocean's surface,” said Dawn M. Martin, President of SeaWeb. “The *Ocean in Focus* contest enables people to see the impacts of their everyday life on the ocean, and inspire positive interaction with this life-giving resource.”

The steel circle hook with heavy monofilament line shown in the winning image is from a longline fishing vessel. Longline fishing can result in the bycatch of non-target species such as sharks, turtles and seabirds. While the introduction of circle hooks, like the one shown in the photo, has reduced the incidence of bycatch, it is still imperfect. In a recent study, Ward et al. (2008)\* found that replacing wire leaders (such as the one in the image) with monofilament line increased the catchability of target species while decreasing shark catch rates by 58%. The issue of protecting sharks, an apex predator of the ocean, has been garnering support this year in the media due to governmental actions taken by several state and national governments, particularly around shark finning. In October, California became the third state in the United States to ban the possession, sale, and distribution of shark fins. The leaders of 8 nations also announced this year that they have developed, or would in the immediate future, shark sanctuaries closed to commercial fishing where sharks will be protected. Just announced on Wednesday November 16, Florida will be the first state prohibiting the harvest and possession of tiger sharks and three species of hammerhead sharks effective January 1, 2012, according to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

The winning photograph has earned Goss a 10-day, two person expedition to the Galapagos Islands with Lindblad Expeditions, the expedition travel company that voyages the world in alliance with the National Geographic Society to inspire people to explore and care about the planet. Lindblad Expeditions offers a full service adventure to the Galapagos Islands and has received acclaim for their philanthropic programs that support the places they visit, as

well as for their environmental sustainability initiatives. On this incredible journey, Lindblad Expeditions patrons will visit many of the unique islands and see the same animals that helped to shape Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution.

"It's hard to easily understand that ocean health is critical for our survival. Photographs can create an indelible impression which touches the heart as well as the brain and helps us seek the understanding we need," Sven-Olof Lindblad, founder of Lindblad Expeditions.

The runner-up for the *Ocean in Focus* contest is Peri Paleracio of Quezon City, the Philippines, for his picture of a boat in the Philippines with plastic and trash pollution suspended in the water. This over-under shot illustrates the often-unseen view of the impact of littering on the ocean. Marine debris, especially plastic, is a major issue in the ocean for myriad reasons. Seabirds commonly ingest plastics and feed them to their young, mistaking the debris for food, which may result in injury or death due to starvation, malnutrition and entanglement, among other impacts. This is also a serious problem for many fish species and baleen whales, which consume plastics and introduce harmful toxins into the food chain. Virtually all plastic that has been produced to date still exists in some form due to its long decomposition rate.

For the runner-up photograph, Paleracio has received a 7-night dive vacation at Matava, Fiji's Premiere Eco Adventure Resort. Matava Resort is a small and intimate getaway designed to blend in with its natural environment. It is the resort's policy to minimize the impact on the environment and to promote and support ecologically sound conservation measures in the surrounding community.

George Stoye and Frank Baensch have both been awarded honorable mentions for their photographs. Stoye submitted a powerful image of frozen tuna being transferred from a fishing vessel to a carrier vessel. Baensch's image shows the danger posed by abandoned gill nets to coral reef ecosystems and how the nets continue to fish long after the fishermen have left the location. Kanyarat Kosavisutte won the honorable mention prize for the "Most Hopeful" photograph, which demonstrates the infectious power of community-based beach cleanups and how local children can play a role in environmental stewardship.

The Marine Photobank would like to thank all participants for submitting photos. Winning images and other submissions for the 2011 contest can be viewed at and downloaded from the Marine Photobank ([www.marinephotobank.org](http://www.marinephotobank.org)) for free non-commercial, educational use by conservationists, teachers, researchers, students, and in some cases, the media, to enlighten others and raise awareness around the threats facing the ocean all over the planet.

**The Marine Photobank**, a program of SeaWeb, advances ocean conservation by collecting and providing compelling, high-quality marine photos, images and graphics at no cost for non-commercial use as well as for media use under special terms. The Marine Photobank aims to illuminate through photographic imagery pressing marine issues and human-related impacts on the ocean. [www.marinephotobank.org](http://www.marinephotobank.org)

**SeaWeb** is the only international, nonprofit organization exclusively dedicated to using the science of communications to transform people's relationship with the ocean. We transform knowledge into action by shining a spotlight on workable, science-based solutions to some of the most serious threats facing the ocean, such as climate change, pollution and depletion of marine life. We work collaboratively with targeted sectors to encourage market solutions,

policies and behaviors that result in a healthy, thriving ocean. By informing and empowering diverse ocean voices and conservation champions, SeaWeb is creating a culture of ocean conservation. [www.seaweb.org](http://www.seaweb.org)

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EDITOR'S NOTE: To arrange interviews, request high-res photos or for more information about the Marine Photobank, contact Jackie Marks at [jmarks@seaweb.org](mailto:jmarks@seaweb.org) or +1.301.495.9570.

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\*Ward, P., E. Lawrence, R. Darbyshire, and S. Hindmarsh. 2008. Large- scale experiment shows that nylon leaders reduce shark bycatch and benefit pelagic longline fishers. Fisheries Research 90: 100-108.

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