

Alex Antoniou, Ph.D.
Fins Attached Marine Research and Conservation
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Biography 2024

Dr. Antoniou began his shark conservation path in 1994 as the Director of Field Operations for the Shark Research Institute based in Princeton New Jersey. He was the first to tag whale sharks in the Caribbean with satellite transmitters, tracking the sharks thousands of miles and to great depths of the Gulf of Mexico. He is currently working as the volunteer CEO for Fins Attached, which he founded in 2010. He has had a passion for shark research and conservation for over 30 years.

Dr. Antoniou, in his pursuit to protect sharks, has traveled to places such as Honduras and Baja California, the Galapagos, Costa Rica, Malpelo Island, Guadalupe Island and the Revillagigedo Islands. On October 28, 1999, Dr. Antoniou met with 50 Honduran government officials in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, to ask for protection for whale sharks in their waters. Officials from the Navy, Department of Tourism, Biodiversity, Marine Fisheries and the Department of Agriculture attended SRI's presentation. After reviewing data provided, the Honduran government decreed the whale shark a protected species their territorial waters with severe penalties for violators. Passage of this law made Honduras the first nation in the Caribbean to protect whale sharks. Alex was featured in a Discovery Channel documentary called 'Future Shark' for his work in Honduras.

In 2002 Dr. Antoniou attended the CITES CoP12 in Santiago Chile where the whale shark had been proposed for Appendix II listing. Alex spoke in front of all delegates providing data to convince member nations to vote in favor of the listing, which they did. This was followed by attending CITES CoP16 in Bangkok, where the hammerhead sharks, giant manta rays, and porbeagle sharks achieved appendix II listings.

In 2005, Dr. Antoniou initiated the first ever shark tagging project at Cocos Island Costa Rica. This was followed by the first project to tag shark in the Galapagos Islands.

In 2016 Dr. Antoniou lobbied a grocery store chain headquarters in Colorado to remove all products containing shark ingredients off their shelves. The store was Natural Grocers. A total of 7 items were removed from sale.

Fins Attached has also been involved in advocacy work. In March of 2017 a position statement was submitted to NOAA Fisheries to lobby for the Oceanic Whitetip shark to be placed on the US Endangered Species list, which ultimately occurred.

Perhaps Alex's greatest achievement was the 2017 acquisition of a 134-foot, long range research expedition vessel, to be able to expand the mission of Fins Attached. He did this by reaching out to colleagues and friends, who cared as much about sharks in the marine environment, to invest in this noble cause, to get the project moving, and to accelerate the

effort to save sharks, the marine environment, and us. The vessel was acquired in April of 2017. At a dedication in Fort Lauderdale, Florida in July of 2017, the Senshu Maru was renamed to “Sharkwater,” in honor of the work started by the late Rob Stewart, the producer of the original *Sharkwater* documentary.

Over the past 28 plus years, Dr. Antoniou has established strong partnerships with scientists around the world. In recognition for his dedication towards shark conservation, Alex was awarded the 2017 “Shark Guardian of the Year” award from the Shark Project of Germany. An international award that is voted on by researchers and organizations from around the world. The equation is simple, Save Sharks + Save our Oceans = Save Us.

In 2019, a corporative agreement between Fins Attached and the Costa Rica Ministry of Environment was signed into place to establish a working relationship for the betterment of the Costa Rica marine environment.

In 2022, Dr. Antoniou spearheaded the creation of an ocean coalition called, One Ocean Worldwide Coalition, comprising of Fins Attached, The Rob Stewart Sharkwater Foundation, For the Oceans Foundation and United Conservationists.

Public awareness is key to the conservation mission. In 2022 Alex attended CITES and helped lobby for the inclusion of 60 additional shark and ray species on Appendix II. He also rallied the public to lobby the USA government to pass the Shark Fins Sales Elimination Act, which was signed into law in December 2022.