

Potential World Record Hammerhead Shark

On May 23, skipper Bucky Dennis of Port Charlotte, Fla., watched a massive hammerhead shark chomp down on a stingray he was live-lining in Boca Grand Pass.

By the time he and his crew had secured the fish, nearly six hours had passed and he found himself 12 miles offshore in his 23-foot flats boat.

Although Dennis guessed that the fish reached the 1,000-pound mark, it wasn't until the shark hit a certified scale later that night that he found out he may have a shot at the next International Game Fish Association all-tackle world record for great hammerhead.

Measuring 14½ feet, the mammoth shark tipped the scales at 1,262 pounds — potentially crushing the former record of 991-pound.

It took Dennis and his crew three hours to drag the fish to the dock where they loaded it on a boat trailer and drove it to a nearby weigh station.

The shark was donated to the Mote Marine Laboratory where it will be studied by their research team.

The necropsy also revealed that the shark's stomach contained the tail end of an estimated five-foot tarpon and a stingray (most likely Dennis's bait). Also embedded in the stomach was a small fishhook. The shark's liver weighed more than 100 pounds.

The news will no doubt create a slew of controversy on the ethics of keeping big fish, especially since shark populations are depleted. As every angler knows, each time we hook a fish we make a decision to release or keep our catch. And many fishermen are aware that the largest fish are often females. "If I had gotten it to the boat and thought that it wasn't the world record, I would have just cut it loose," says Dennis. "Likewise, if I could have weighed it at sea and released it, I absolutely would have. But if I had taken just the length and girth and come in and said, 'I caught the world record,' no one would have believed me. I'll be honest, I wanted the fish properly documented. After all, catching a fish like that was something that no one else had ever done."

It was also discovered that the shark was pregnant with 55 pups inside her. Although Capt. Dennis did nothing illegal by keeping her, he would have been a much better angler, sportsman, and person if he had released her, instead her and all 55 pups are now dead.

May 5th 2009 (Second Hammerhead Killed By Bucky Davis)

Angler reels in 1,000 pound shark... again

PORT CHARLOTTE: A local fisherman has quite the fish tale to tell after reeling in a 1,000 pound shark.

While he says it's not his best or his biggest, it could be a world record.

"This one weighed out at 1,060-pounds," said angler Bucky Dennis. "The old record was 620-pounds caught in Freeport, Texas in 1982."

Dennis said it took some brute strength, but he did it single handedly.

"Caught him in Boca Grande about 9:00 this morning," he said.

But he didn't have the shark in the boat until about 11:30 a.m.

"I saw this hammerhead come and hooked him up like I usually do. And kicked back for two-and-a-half-hours," he said.

Eventually, the shark succumbed to the much lighter angler. But it wasn't the first time Dennis had the chance to feel good about reeling in a 13-foot shark.

He caught a hammerhead shark in 2006 in the same waters off Boca Grande, shattering a world record of a different class.

"That was 1,282-pounds," said Dennis.

He donated that one to the Shark Center at Mote Marine for research.

"Driving down State Road 776 with a 1,000 pound shark on a trailer attracts a little attention," Dennis said. "I'm getting

older. I don't know if I'll be able to do this forever."

Dennis has three months to send paperwork to the International Game Fish Association to determine if the shark is indeed a record-breaker.

Right now, he doesn't know what he'll do with his latest catch.