Spotlight 8

Reading Task 8622

You are going to read a text about shark conservationist, Rob Stewart. Choose which of the statements (1-6) are 1 (true), 2 (false) or 3 (not stated).



When we talk about endangered species, we might mention the sea turtle or the giant panda or maybe even the Asian elephant, but we rarely consider the shark. That's not surprising when we see sharks in films, TV series and books portrayed as man-eating predators. In fact, the shark population has dropped over the last 30 years by 90%, mainly because of illegal fishing. Sharks may be at the top of the food chain, but they have a vital role in maintaining the ecosystem. When their numbers decrease, it disturbs the natural balance of the oceans.

One man, Rob Stewart, has dedicated himself to raising awareness about sharks, whose bad reputation is. he believes, completely undeserved. "Sharks kill about 5 people a year and yet they are loathed," he says. "Elephants kill at least 100 people but when a single elephant falls in Africa the world goes crazy."

Stewart first became fascinated by sharks as a child and after graduating with a degree in Marine Biology, he became a wildlife photographer. It was on an assignment to the Galapagos Islands, one of the world's most protected marine reserves, that he came across hundreds of dead sharks hanging from a 60 km length of commercial fishing line. If that kind of illegal fishing could happen there, what was happening in the rest of the world? He found that up to 100 million sharks are being killed every year and a third of the 500 species of shark are under threat of extinction. Shark fins are incredibly valuable as a luxury item particularly for use in shark fin soup. Dried fins go for as much as S300 for half a kilo, but the rest of the shark is discarded. Yet, people aren't as concerned about the mass murder of sharks as they are about koala bears.



Stewart decided the best way to show the world what was happening was to make a documentary After spending his life savings, watching DVDs on his laptop and learning the basics of film-making, he set off for Costa Rica where he swam with and even hugged the sharks while making his film. As sharks are afraid of humans, he spent an enormous amount of time underwater just hoping for the sharks to come near. Stewart learned how to control his heartbeat to avoid panicking the sharks. After coming into conflict with organised crime and local authorities, he had to escape by boat. Another time he caught a flesh-eating disease that led to a stay in hospital.

Despite such difficulties. Stewart managed to produce *Sharkwater,* a powerful documentary about the cruel way mankind treats sharks. It has been a huge success, winning lots of international awards, but Stewart is carrying on with his mission to save the shark. "The oceans feed most of the planet. It's a system we can't mess with," Stewart says. "It's not just about saving sharks, it's about saving ourselves."

1 (true) 2 (false) 3 (not stated).

1. Most people are not aware that the sharks are in danger.

2. Sharks kill more people every year than any other animal.

3. Stewart became interested in sharks after graduating from university.

4. Shark fins are a prized ingredient.

5. Stewart ran out of money while making the film.

6. Not everyone in Costa Rica was happy with what Stewart was doing.

LIVEWORKSHEETS