



Close-up: William Winram moves in on a great white shark. Photo: Fred Buyle

World-ranking free diver William Winram now focuses on protecting our great white shark, **Simon Nettle** writes.

Career with bite

When I was told it was possible to have a career swimming with great white sharks in their natural habitat, I pictured all those teeth and felt a distinct discomfort – or maybe this was an idea instilled in me by Steven Spielberg's 1975 box-office hit, *Jaws*. Without a doubt, this film capitalised on our natural fear of this forbidding animal and established the image of the great white shark as the mindless killing machine of the water world.

Our fear of these powerful creatures of the deep is, perhaps, natural. We are out of our element in the ocean and its inhabitants are mysterious and unpredictable. It is no surprise the animal widely regarded as Earth's scariest is also one that we know little about. Unfortunately, our exaggerated

fears have led to unnecessary brutality towards the great white, to the extent that it is now regarded as a vulnerable species by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

Contrary to their depiction in Hollywood, sharks are often placid, curious, and friendly members of the marine community that also exhibit the hallmarks of marked intelligence.

William Winram, the world champion in the sport of free diving, has joined efforts to improve our understanding of sharks and work towards their conservation.

Winram began free diving – diving to extreme depths without breathing gear – after a back injury in 2005 forced him away from competitive swimming. He quickly garnered success at the World Championships and began to make

history, most recently setting the 145-metre world record for variable-weight breath-hold diving, at Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.

Free divers accomplish these seemingly supernatural feats with the aid of the mammalian dive reflex,

The best thing we could do was to use our skills to help in tagging sharks.

William Winram

which we share with seals, whales, and dolphins. The human body naturally redistributes blood from the extremities to the heart, lungs, and brain in order to conserve oxygen and to protect the organs from the crushing pressure divers encounter at depth.

Winram's interest in shark conservation was sparked by an amazing close encounter. Face-to-face with a large tiger shark in the wild, Winram expected the worst but found instead a calm and curious animal that appeared more interested in simply observing and interacting than attacking him.

This experience transformed Winram's initial fear into a desire to protect these misunderstood creatures. He and fellow diver Fred Buyle saw an opportunity to use their rare skills in free diving to help save sharks.

"Fred and I wanted to give something back to the sea; we both love and are passionate about the sea and being in the sea. The best thing we could do was to use our breath-hold and underwater hunting and stalking skills to help in tagging sharks," Winram says.

He and his wife raise money for shark research and use his free diving fame to generate awareness about the importance of sharks in the ecosystem. Most recently, Winram and his associates have collaborated to produce a spectacular IMAX documentary, *Great White Shark 3D*. It is showing at IMAX Melbourne and showcases the rarely-seen majesty of the great white.

"It's the closest you'll get to being in the water, face-to-face with a great white shark, like we do, but without getting wet. It shows you all the facets of the shark, and you'll see not only its power and how amazing a predator it is, but also how shy and curious it can be," Winram says.

Great White Shark 3D is showing at IMAX Melbourne
imaxmelbourne.com.au.

Sea for yourself!

At Mornington Peninsula Shire we offer exceptional working conditions including salary, sacrifice in Council gym and golf membership, an active social club, paid parental leave and flexible working arrangements for the right work/life balance.

We encourage our team members to undertake further education and training to continually develop new skills and expertise and support this with tertiary study assistance.

A career in local government gives you the chance to engage with the community, to respond to their needs and provide them with real solutions to make a difference.

We offer a huge array of employment opportunities in many diverse professions; eg. Maternal & Child Health Nursing, Engineering, Planning, Youth Work and Sport & Recreation.

www.mornpen.vic.gov.au



For more information scan the QR code or visit the careers section of our web site: www.mornpen.vic.gov.au

In the spirit of respect,
Mornington Peninsula Shire acknowledges the Boonwurrung/Bunurong,
members of the Kulin Nation, who have traditional connections to the land on which Council meets.



COMMITTED TO A
SUSTAINABLE
PENINSULA