



## HOW TO SAVE A PREDATOR

AFTER HELPING TO BAN THE SHARK TRADE IN THE COOK ISLANDS, JESSICA CRAMP WANTS TO KNOW: CAN A LAW PROTECT SHARKS?

BY NINA STROCHLIC PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDY MANN

**THEY ARE ON A BOAT DOCK**, hands coated with the innards of a yellowfin tuna, when Konini Rongo and Bella Smith learn that they live in one of the world's largest shark sanctuaries.

The girls, both 17, are chopping up scraps next to a row of fishing boats at a port on Rarotonga, the biggest of the 15 Cook Islands. They volunteered to help American marine biologist Jessica Cramp place underwater cameras to spot sharks. But first comes the messy task of making bait, as Cramp—whose work is supported by National Geographic and Rolex—tells them the story of the 484-million-acre protected area.

In 2011 Cramp moved to the South Pacific islands, where the reefs teem with sharks, to help launch a campaign for the sanctuary. Eighteen months later it was law, with a minimum \$73,000 fine levied on

any boat found selling or transporting shark parts in the Cook Islands' exclusive economic zone.

Now Cramp plans to insert satellite tags into the backs of 28 sharks so she can follow their movements. Little is known about the region's sharks. Cramp wants to find out where and how far they're traveling—vital data for designing better protections.

On the boat Cramp shows the teens the drill: how to attach a GoPro camera and bait stick to a device that will moor them to the ocean floor, how to log the GPS coordinates so they can pull it up later. If a shark is drawn to the area by the bait, she explains, they're going to hook the animal, rope it to the side of the boat, cut a slit at the base of its dorsal fin, and slide in a satellite tag. The girls look horrified.

"It sounds brutal, but it's going to give us