



Bill Goldschmitt supplies sharks, large and small, to laboratories, schools and aquatariums throughout Florida. ↑

I live sharks: Bill Goldschmitt

By JERRY HILL

"You can lose your shirt fishing for sharks", understated commercial fisherman Bill Goldschmitt.

Goldschmitt is a paradox. A softspoken, pleasant individual who tackles the biggest, most dangerous fish in local waters and beats them. In an age of air conditioning, automatic doors and TV dinners, Goldschmitt does battle with a creature that has survived eons with little change.

What are the markets for sharks and shark by-products?

Laboratories, colleges, merchants, tourists and shark enthusiasts all are in the market for sharks.

Goldschmitt has an order now for a large (over 12 feet) tiger shark's jaws, eyes and optic nerves.

He has supplied live sharks for the Miami Seaquarium, Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota, St. Petersburg Aquatarium and Sea World in Orlando.

Live specimens, in good condition, bring up to \$500 according to Goldschmitt.

At that price everyone should be out fishing for sharks, right?

"Wrong," says Goldschmitt. "Shark fishing is not for the inexperienced. One mistake and you are dead."

According to Goldschmitt, the ability to bring a shark to boatside does not guarantee it (the shark) will be delivered to a buyer in a condition where it is capable of surviving. Special equipment and techniques are needed to handle even the smallest sharks so they have a chance of living in captivity.

Since the "Jaws" mania spread throughout the country, the demand and price for shark jaws have escalated to the point where one buyer recently paid Goldschmitt \$250 for a set of jaws from a 12-foot tiger shark. The average price ranges from \$20 to \$80 per pair.

There is a market for small sharks including the unborn sharks removed from the pregnant females. These are preserved and sold to laboratories and colleges or to taxidermists.

How does Goldschmitt catch enough sharks to make it profitable?

For a variety of reasons he doesn't want to give out many of the secrets of his trade, but just imagine a trotline set for fish which are 10 to 15 feet long and with mouths full of three-inch teeth. Goldschmitt's favorite baits are jacks and bonito. He maintains that by mixing an occasional bonito into a line of jacks he will attract more sharks to his line. The sharks seem to be lured by the bloody bonito but end up taking the offered jack.

Goldschmitt draws on his nine years experience as a professional sharkerman in a book to be published this spring. In "Shark Adventure: Florida Shark Fishing" he will discuss his experiences and those of other veterans in the shark fishing industry.

Goldschmitt says his book will fire a number of literary harpoons into some current theories on sharks and at some of the recognized shark authorities.

Why does a man risk his life in a profession where the financial rewards are meager and the sea's "grim reaper" sulks below his boat, waiting for an error?

"I do it for the excitement. I dream of sharks. I live sharks."

Bill Goldschmitt 1950—?

Jerry Hill is The Bradenton Herald's outdoor writer.