

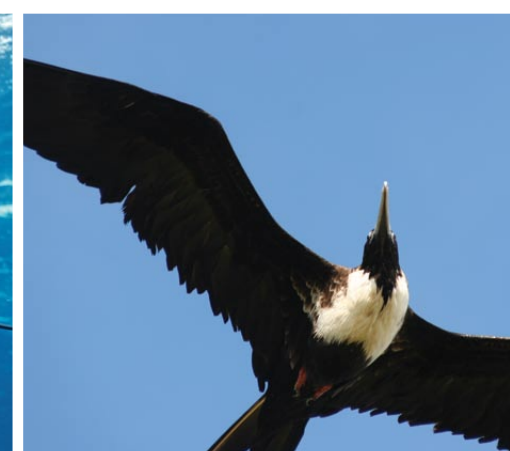


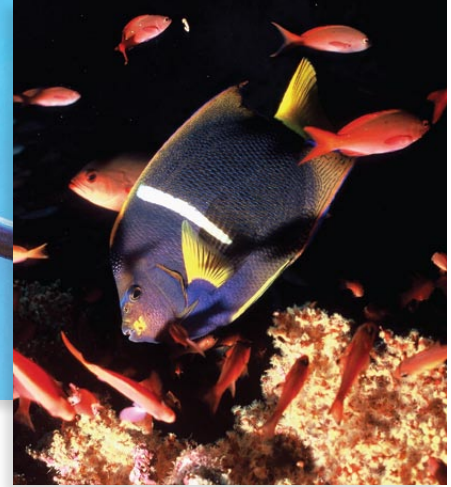
Guy Harvey

Guardian of the Seas

By Bret Love
Photos by Guy Harvey

Guy Harvey wears many hats. He's best known as a wildlife artist, whose stunningly realistic portraits of marine life have made his brand immensely popular with sport fishermen, adorning everything from T-shirts and jewellery to golf bags and home furnishings. The chain of seafood restaurants bearing his name, Guy Harvey's Island Grill, includes locations in Florida, Alabama, South Carolina, Texas and the Cayman Islands. There are Guy Harvey books, grilling sauces, boat wraps and DVDs, charting his adventures as an avid angler and diver. But if you ask Harvey, his most important efforts come from his lifelong work as a marine conservationist.





A 10th generation Jamaican of English heritage, Harvey studied marine biology at Scotland's Aberdeen University before getting his Ph.D. in Fisheries Management from the University of the West Indies in 1982. He found a way to combine his love of art and the sea in the mid-1980s, but he never stopped studying the ocean and fighting to preserve the creatures that inhabit it. For years he has donated proceeds from the sale of his artwork to protect marine life and advocate for responsible, sustainable commercial and recreational fishing. And in 1999 he teamed with Fort Lauderdale's Nova Southeastern University to found the Guy Harvey Research Institute, which conducts research on the ecology and conservation of sharks and stingrays, artificial reef design and more.

We recently spoke to the International Game Fish Association Hall of Fame member about the origins of his interest in art, the prominent issues facing marine life today, and what the average person can do to help keep our oceans healthy for generations to come.

How do you think growing up in the Caribbean influenced your interest in marine biology?

I grew up in southwest Jamaica, where my parents farmed beef cattle. They also had a small beach cottage on the coast at Belmont, near Bluefields, and both loved fishing. My dad had a 26-foot-long canoe built, with an outboard engine, bamboo outriggers and a local fisherman, Zachie Clark, to guide him. Each time I was at home on school holidays I went fishing with my parents or a local charter boat captain. My desire to

learn more about fish and, subsequently, to study and paint them originated from these early experiences.

Where did your interest in art originate?

Another great influence was the book *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway. By the time I was 12 I'd read this book several times and the featured fish, the blue marlin, became the icon of my fishing experiences. At age 15 I wrote my own version, called *The Young Men and the Sea*, which was set in Jamaica using characters I fished with on a regular basis. Then, at age 17, I began a two-year project to illustrate Hemingway's story, as I considered other artists' attempts inaccurate. I did 60 pieces of work telling the whole story in pen and ink. In 1985, they formed the basis of my first one-man art exhibition, and subsequently my first book, *Santiago's Finest Hour*. As the years went by I was able to supplement my meagre salary as a Ph.D. student with occasional sales of my art at fishing tournaments in Jamaica. Then several people — particularly Scott Boyd, Barbara Currie and Charlie Forman — assisted me in having my first art shows in the Bahamas and Florida in 1986.

You got your Ph.D. in Fisheries Management. At what point did the art go from being a part-time hobby to a full-time career?

The transition was slow. I was busy finishing up my Ph.D. thesis, and then began teaching while there were increasing demands for my work in Florida. By 1986 my work was appearing on apparel, and I signed a contract with a company called T-Shirts of Florida.



I resigned from the University of the West Indies and went full-time into the production of art, holding up to five exhibitions per year in several states. My style broadened to include watercolour, oil and acrylic paint. In all of these media I experimented a great deal, but my strength was in my knowledge of the anatomy, physiology and ecology of the animals I painted.

Do you remember a certain revelation that took you from merely appreciating marine life to feeling compelled to protect it?

Over the next 20 years, as my horizons broadened, the Guy Harvey brand became more successful, so I travelled more in search of new angling and diving experiences. Many conservation issues appeared on my radar screen and, as I spent a lot of time specialising in interactions with large oceanic fish, the predicament facing sharks, billfish and tunas became a priority. I learned that industrial fishing, such as long-lining and gill-netting indiscriminately, had a huge amount of by-catch or non-targeted species that were discarded. Most offensive was the issue of shark-finning. This is a diabolical practice where sharks are caught, their fins removed and their bodies discarded overboard

while still alive. If this happened on land — if deer were trapped and their legs cut off while still alive — do you think people would tolerate this behaviour? So much abuse of marine species happens at sea, out of sight of the public.

What would you say are the most pressing issues facing our oceans and marine life today?

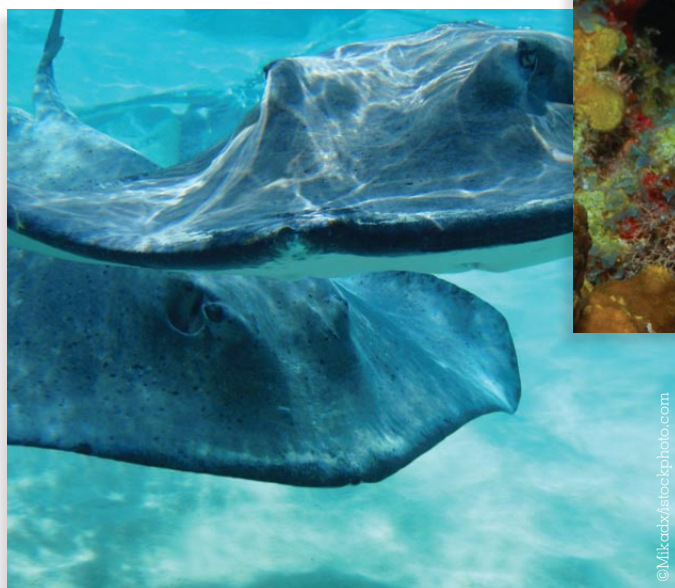
Overpopulation is the greatest threat. The level of extraction of marine resources to feed the huge human population has caused the decline of so many species. Many species of sharks, tuna, billfish, turtles, rays groupers, cod, etc., have been over-extracted and their recovery will take decades even if we stop today. This is a far greater threat than other issues, such as global warming. Substituting the protein we obtain from seafood consumption is one way to reduce our impact on marine species. Farming certain species is another option. The Guy Harvey Research Institute publishes a seafood guide to assist the public in making the best choices when consuming seafood.

What are some of the more intriguing things you've discovered through the GHRI's work with Nova Southeastern University?

Shark research work has been a priority because these animals face serious threats. The GHRI works on a number of different species, including Caribbean reef sharks, blue sharks, mako sharks and tiger sharks. Perhaps the most rewarding projects have come from long-term tracking of tiger sharks tagged in Bermuda, the U.S. Virgin Islands, The Bahamas and here in Grand Cayman. We also work on several species of groupers, billfish and rays and collaborate with a number of other fishery research institutions. My licensees all contribute funds and assist in the conservation effort. I'm very strong on cause marketing, and let all customers know that, in buying any Guy Harvey merchandise, they're supporting marine conservation and education.

What can the average person do to ensure the future health of our oceans?

For people who fish regularly, I encourage them to join a local angling club, a regional angling organi-



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zation and a national conservation organization. By doing so, they can stay informed and participate in the educational and conservation process. I encourage anglers, divers and boaters to pursue their hobby responsibly, and obey local laws governing bag limits, size limits, closed areas, marine parks, etc.

There are certain types of seafood you refuse to serve at your restaurants. Can you talk about which fish people shouldn't eat and why?

Locally available species such as yellowfin tuna, wahoo, dolphin (mahi), snapper and rainbow runner are all served when available, as well as lobster and conch in season. Certain fish species, including king mackerel, barracuda, amberjack and large groupers, can bio-accumulate certain toxins that can be poisonous to consumers. Other species have a high-mercury content that's unacceptable for consumption. Here in the Cayman Islands, large reef fish such as groupers, snappers, jacks, barracudas and sharks are far more valuable as a living resource than they are as a filet on a plate. Reef fishing — whether it is by line, spear or trap — is incompatible with an active diving industry as the focal point of Cayman's tourism sector.

You're a lot of different things — an artist, sport fisherman, conservationist and restaurant owner. How do you see these different sides of yourself intersecting?

There are several disciplines that form the core of my interests, activities and company operations. The scientific knowledge provides artistic authenticity as well as the reason for operation of the GHRI and, more recently, the Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation. The award-winning TV series "Portraits from the Deep" was an educational outlet for my fishing and diving expeditions, combining science, exploration, adventure and art in one production. My TV experiences have led me to shoot and produce more one-hour productions on the natural history of tiger sharks, reef sharks, stingrays and several billfish species. And I'm now embarking on a new one-hour special about conservation efforts here in the Cayman Islands, with the protection of Nassau groupers at their annual spawning aggregation sites in Little Cayman as an anchor for the documentary.

What are your other goals for the future?

There is a lot of work in marine conservation to be done. It's a vast arena, and a task best attacked in collaboration with as many other like-minded institutions as possible. The more we collaborate, undertake and educate together, the better the result will be for the marine environment and, ultimately, for us all. The artwork is the driving force behind the brand, and is repurposed for a multiplicity of uses. I love painting, so the brand will last indefinitely, and one of my goals is to have my children carry on the good work we've already accomplished.