



Where I work Jasmin Graham

I fell in love with the ocean growing up fishing with my family. Once I learnt you could get paid to study fish, I sought out a marine-science degree at the College of Charleston in South Carolina, where a mentor's enthusiasm for sharks rubbed off on me. I then went on to study another predator – sawfish – for my master's degree at Florida State University in Tallahassee.

Predators keep fish numbers on a reef in balance, which prevents overgrazing and disease spread. Sharks have been on the planet longer than trees or dinosaurs, and I study how the millions of years of evolution have led to the weird faces of animals such as hammerhead sharks and sawfish. I also conduct surveys of predators to document them in the wild. In this photo, we are about to release a blacknose shark (*Carcharhinus acronotus*). In just a couple of minutes, we had measured it, taken a fin sample for genetic analysis and a muscle biopsy to look at mercury levels and tagged it for identification.

Another part of my job at Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium in Sarasota, Florida,

is to increase diversity in marine science. I train researchers to be allies of interns from minoritized groups by being mindful of how identities affect peoples' experiences.

As president and chief executive of Minorities in Shark Science, a non-profit organization that I co-founded in 2020 and that has 489 members from 33 countries, I instruct institutions and individuals on how to overturn oppressive systems. We focus on removing barriers – often financial – that exclude women of colour from marine sciences. We provide funded field experiences, professional development and diversity training.

Organizations still do a lot of box-ticking to add 'diverse' people rather than addressing root causes of inequality. My colleagues and I highlight the importance of a strong code of conduct, accountability and training. Having an army of allies drowns out the bad players.

Jasmin Graham is the president and chief executive of Minorities in Shark Sciences in Brandenton, Florida. **Interview by Virginia Gewin.**

Photographed for *Nature* by
Cassie Wegeng.