



29 May 2025

**Re: Nomination Colin Simpfendorfer for Lifetime Achievement Award**

Dear OCS Committee,

On behalf of myself and Cassie Rigby, with support from Ana Martins, Sushmita Mukherji, Jordan Matley, Jonathan Smart, Madi Green, Lachlan George, and Louisa Graf, we would like to nominate Prof. Colin Simpfendorfer for the OCS Lifetime Achievement Award.

Colin's career spans over thirty years and has left a lasting legacy on numerous shark scientists and research programs, and led to numerous effective regional, national, and international policy shifts for sharks that have made enduring contributions to shark conservation implementation. He received his Bachelor's degree in Zoology and Marine Biology from James Cook University (JCU) in 1985 and his Honours, titled "The systematics, biology, and external parasites of carcharhinid, hemigaleid and sphyrnid sharks from the inshore waters of the Townsville region" in 1986. Colin completed his PhD thesis "The biology of sharks of the family Carcharhinidae from the nearshore waters of Cleveland Bay, with particular reference to *Rhizoprionodon taylori*" at JCU in 1993. During his PhD, in 1989, he received the Gilbert P. Whitley Memorial Student Award from the Australian Society for Fish Biology for his research on "Embryonic diapause in the Australian Sharpnose Shark, *Rhizoprionodon taylori*."

After his PhD, Colin worked as a Senior Research Scientist with the Western Australian Department of Fisheries where he studied biology, movement, and impacts of commercial fisheries on shark and ray populations. Some of this seminal work led to implementation of management measures and subsequent recovery of overfished populations.

In 1999, Colin moved to Florida as a Senior Scientist and Program Manager at Mote Marine Laboratory where he led a dedicated sawfish research program and provided vital information to inform policies that have since led to population recoveries of sawfish in United States waters.

Colin returned to JCU in 2007 as the Director and Senior Principal Research Fellow of the Fishing and Fisheries Research Centre. From 2011 to 2018, he served as the Director of the Centre for Sustainable Tropical Fisheries and Aquaculture and led ~40 staff and ~80 postgraduate students. From 2017 to 2018, Colin was also the Associate Dean of Research for the College of Science and Engineering fostering and managing programs to improve the culture of research. During his time at JCU, he supervised at least 13 Honours students, >5 masters students and more than 35 PhD students on a wide-range of topics including life history, fisheries, movement, trophic ecology, and physiology, among others. He also supervised five Postdoctoral fellows during his time at JCU.



Colin's work has been on the forefront of shark and ray research, including: pioneering methods for marine animal tracking that moved the global field forward and led to fundamental changes in the understanding of shark ecology and marine ecosystems; establishing the paradigm of shark nursery areas and changing the approach to these areas; a lifetime of work building life history information and its contribution to demography, population dynamics, and stock assessment; recognising the importance of integrating the human dimension into the conservation of endangered species; and leading foundational work on the population dynamics and assessment of sustainability of sharks and rays both nationally and globally.

Colin has earned a multitude of major grants in Australia and in the United States from numerous government and non-government sources totalling over \$8 million AUD. His work does not usually focus on the typical species imagined when the word 'shark' is used, but rather on the mesopredatory sharks and rays. He has a keen interest in small tropical sharks and rays and their use of mangroves and intertidal sand flats. He has worked on aging and life history traits, including reproduction for numerous species.

Colin's academic leadership is also demonstrated through his work as an Associate Editor for Marine and Freshwater Research. He is also a regular reviewer, averaging more than two reviews per year for eight different journals, in addition to reviewing papers for a large variety of additional journals.

He was nominated by students and won an award, including co-supervisors, as the 'Advisory Panel of the Year' in 2013. This demonstrates his incredible ability to work with co-supervisors to support graduate students and ensure they excel throughout their degrees.

In 2016, Colin won the 'Best Paper' award from the Marine Biodiversity Hub in the National Environmental Science Programme for his work using eDNA to detect Critically Endangered sawfish in the wild. Recently, in 2024, Colin was nominated for the prestigious Indianapolis 'Guardians of Wilderness' Prize.

Colin has held numerous leadership positions at the national, regional and global level for shark and ray management, research, and conservation. These include, he has been a member of the Shark Specialist Group (SSG) in the IUCN Species Survival Commission since its establishment in 1991, was the regional Vice-chair for the Australia and Oceania region, and then served as the Co-Chair of the SSG for 10 years. He has also served as the Chair of AFMA's (Australian Fisheries Management Authority) Shark Resources Assessment Group, Chair of the Australian Animal Tracking and Monitoring System's Data Subcommittee, and remains active in the Queensland Shark Control Program Scientific Working Group. Colin was appointed to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Threatened Species Scientific Committee in 2015 and re-appointed in 2023, demonstrating his nationally recognised expertise in management of sharks and rays. Colin has also been appointed to the Conservation Working Group of the CMS (Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species) Sharks MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) in 2016, demonstrating his international recognition as a world leader on international policy and management of sharks and rays.



Colin's work extends beyond research and advising students to international policy through his work with the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES). Colin has attended the last four CITES Convention of Parties (CoP) in Bangkok, Johannesburg, Geneva, and Panama City. He has provided scientific advice to the Australian government for the production of Non-Detriment Findings for sharks listed on Appendix II of CITES in 2014. He also designed and ran a training course in Fiji in 2016 on the production of Non-Detriment Findings for CITES shark and ray species for Pacific Island Nations

According to Google Scholar, Colin has published 543 journal articles, reports, and books or book chapters. His work has been cited over 26,000 times. There is not a shark researcher in the world who does not know the name Colin Simpfendorfer and likely none who have not cited his work at some point.

Colin has been a member of OCS since 2007, and was the keynote speaker at the first ever OCS conference in Queenscliff, Victoria in 2007. He was selected by the student organisers to be the keynote again at the 20th anniversary conference in the Sunshine Coast, Queensland. He has also been invited to give Keynote and opening addresses at many international conferences including:

- Australian Society for Fish Biology / OCS 2012 in Adelaide, SA
- Sharks International 2014 in Durban, South Africa
- European Elasmobranch Association 2016 in Bristol, UK
- Shark Conservation Summit 2019 in Sydney, NSW
- Oceania Chondrichthyan Society Conference 2025 in Sunshine Coast, QLD

Colin has also served in several roles in the American Elasmobranch Society, including serving on the Board of Directors from 2004-2008 and the Grant Fund Committee twice, as Chair from 2000-2002 and a member from 2010-2013.

What is almost more impressive than his long list of publications, is Colin's high reputation within the national and global shark science community. It is rare to find individuals who are well-liked by everyone, but Colin is one of those people. In addition to supporting his students during their degrees, he actively assists with finding jobs upon graduation and will often support recently graduated students to improve their publication record and seek permanent roles. Colin continues to collaborate with previous students and provides mentorship years after they graduate.

Colin's character is best exemplified by the number of former students who are still active in the field. His legacy will really live on through those he has trained and continues to support. It is especially telling how much former students appreciate his mentorship, as I asked a small group for letters of support with less than one week's notice and many former students, who have extremely busy lives, made sure to put time aside so they could describe Colin's influence in their lives and shark science globally. Though we completed our PhDs and several



are well beyond the “ECR” stage, Colin still acts as a mentor. We believe that makes him incredibly deserving of this award.

Thank you for your consideration of Colin Simpfendorfer as a recipient of the OCS Lifetime Achievement Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr. C. Samantha Sherman  
**Senior Lecturer, Life and Environmental Sciences, Deakin University**