

SHeldon FILM THEATRE **Documentary Films**



A SENSE OF PLACE
The Artist and the American Land
Produced by Gene Bunge Filmed & Edited by Mike Farrell

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UNL professor in sea special

Sawfish and sharks make for delicious eating, but Thomas Thorson had something else in mind during his latest fishing expedition to Lake Nicaragua in Central America.

Thorson, a UNL professor of zoology, was in Nicaragua for three weeks to help film the bull sharks and sawfish in the lake for an upcoming Jacques Cousteau documentary.

Cousteau, renowned oceanographer, has produced several TV specials concerning the undersea world in recent years.

Sharks were once thought to be land-locked, fresh water fish. Thorson said his research has proved this is not so however.

After tagging over 3,000 bull sharks in Lake Nicaragua and in the Atlantic Ocean, Thorson concluded that the sharks travel 100 miles upstream from the ocean to the 40,000 square mile lake.

Tagged on shore

During Thorson's trip to Lake Nicaragua, six days were spent filming and tagging bull sharks near San Carlos, Nicaragua. Local fishermen are employed to catch the sharks which tagged on the shore where they are virtually helpless, he explained.

Sharks grow up to eight feet in length and have been known to attack people, Thorson said.

This trip's shark tagging was a little disappointing, he said. On previous trips from six to twenty sharks were caught and tagged per day. This time they averaged only one a day, Thorson said.

Sawfish population declined

Because of the amount of commercial fishing in the lake, the sawfish population has declined significantly, according to Thorson. No sawfish were filmed during this expedition.

The waters of Lake Nicaragua are turbid and overgrown with vegetation, which added to the crew's filming problems, Thorson said.

"You can't see a foot in front of your face," he said. "But we got enough (pictures)."

Thorson will be traveling to Los Angeles in December to work on the script for the television special.

The rest of the crew went to the coast to continue filming, while Thorson returned to Lincoln.

The water may be clearer in the lagoons along the Atlantic Coast and provide better filming conditions, Thorson said.



Thomas Thorson, UNL professor of zoology, recently returned from a three week expedition tagging bull sharks in Nicaragua for an upcoming Jacques Cousteau 'Undersea World' documentary.

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