UNE's 'Dr. Shark' spearheads unique research

By ANGELO J. VERZONI
Staff Writer

BIDDEFORD — Take one step inside James Sulikowski's office at the University of New England's Marine Science Center and it's not hard to tell what makes the 46-year-old Saco resident tick.

Shark jaws, from ones that could barely wrap around a person's fist to ones that could fit a watermelon, line the walls and fill up the top half of a bookshelf. Sulikowski – a shark researcher and professor of marine science at UNE, who is known to some at the university as "Dr. Shark" – has been studying sharks for the last 15 years, working in the Gulf of Maine, which stretches from Cape Cod to the southern tip of Nova Scotia, as well as in places like Alaska, Turkey and the Gulf of Mexico.

"Sharks are fascinating," he said Thursday. "Here in the Gulf of Maine, most people don't know this, but we've got nine different species. It's a pretty sharky area, which is pretty cool."

Currently, Sulikowski and his team of three graduate and 16 undergraduate students are primarily studying the behavior of young porbeagle sharks in the Gulf of Maine – a unique project that will help scientists better understand the porbeagle, a relatively large species of shark typically found in the open ocean of the North Atlantic.

"What makes what we're doing now unique is that most of the work that you see on 'Shark Week' focuses on the big ones, like white sharks and tiger sharks, which we do study," he said. "But what often goes overlooked are the babies. Baby sharks are like the next generation, so you have to understand them in order to protect the adults."

With many young porbeagles having been observed off the southern coast of Maine, Sulikowski said his team – the first group to "really focus on this young, baby group of sharks" – intends to determine how the species, which some fear is close to endangerment, is using Maine waters and how that information can help better manage its population.

The research team has been collecting data for the project by attaching satellite tags to the dorsal fins of young porbeagles found off the coast, said Sulikowski. Although the devices are costly at about $4,000 apiece, he said they are worth it, gathering temperature, depth and geolocation data before popping off and floating to the ocean surface for easy retrieval.

In the Gulf of Maine and in other areas, such as the Gulf of Mexico, Sulikowski is also working on projects that explore the viability of fishing certain shark species, such as the spiny dogfish, in place of traditionally fished species, such as Atlantic cod, whose population numbers have been falling sharply for the last several years.

"If we find out that a shark grows faster than we thought, then we can probably fish it a little bit heavier," he said. "If we find out it takes a lot longer, then we have to get stricter conservation measures."

Although Sulikowski made headlines a few weeks ago when he debunked a spate of reported great white sightings off the coast of southern Maine, he said given current trends, it is possible great whites could soon be swimming into Maine waters more frequently – and that's a day Dr. Shark looks forward to seeing.

"We have a pretty good seal population up here and as the white shark population grows down south, I wouldn't be surprised if they kind of slowly checked things out up here," he said. "And that'd be awesome for me."

— Staff Writer Angelo J. Verzoni can be contacted at 282-1535, ext. 329 or averzoni@journaltribune.com.

Neighbor

Shark researcher Dr. James Sulikowski is pictured in his office at the University of New England's Marine Science Center on Thursday.

ANGELO J. VERZONI/ Journal Tribune

Atop military heap, spotlight feels bright, power seems dim

By ROBERT BURNS
AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON — The man often called America's top military officer, the most powerful person in uniform, actually commands nothing. No tanks, no planes, no ships, no troops.

His voice carries great weight, but he gives no combat orders.

He is chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – adviser to presidents, advocate for troops, strategic thinker, and occasionally a political punching bag. He stands atop the military heap, and the role has grown in influence and public prominence, yet it remains arguably one of the least understood. In the view of some who have held the job, this disconnect has made the chairman more vulnerable to political swipes from all sides.

With the Joint Chiefs of Staff officially established after World War II, 18 men have held the job since 1949. Nine were Army generals, four were Navy admirals, four were from the Air Force and one was a Marine. (No woman is likely to fill the job anytime soon in a male-dominated military.)

Pending an expected Senate vote to confirm him this month, Gen. Joseph Dunford will be the next chairman. The commandant of the Marine Corps sailed through his confirmation hearing Thursday and is expected to take over Oct. 1 for Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, who will retire after a 41-year Army career.

The chairman is the public face of the military, but he is not in the formal chain of command linking the president to his commanders in the field. Dempsey, who is completing four years in the job, has said it reminds him of entering the Army as a lowly second lieutenant.

"I felt like I had enormous responsibility but I didn't have very much authority; that's kind of what it's like being chairman," he said in January 2014.

Today, as he looks back, Dempsey says he grew into the role, not fully realizing at the outset just how brightly the public spotlight would shine.

"In those early days that was very uncomfortable space for me. I navigated it because it is part of the job," he said.

By law, the chairman presides over the Joint Chiefs of Staff – the top officers of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps, and since 2012, the National Guard. Collectively they form a sounding board for commanders of key combat organizations such as U.S. Central Command, and for the president and the secretary of defense. The position of Joint Chiefs vice chairman was added in 1986.

The chairman advises the president and the defense secretary on military threats, risks and options, but he bears no obligation to toe the political line of the White House. Yet this proximity to power is what sometimes makes the chairman a ready target of partisan political attacks.

Call Center

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ed the lowest-cost support, but that's not necessarily the case for new companies that are more focused on innovation, Dhar said. Also, the cost differential between operating in India and U.S. is less than it used to be, creating opportunity for hybrid service models, he said.

His company began looking for a U.S. partner in the spring.

That search led to an agreement with Argo Marketing, which will hire and employ the tech support workers in Lewiston and several other locations in Maine, said Argo CEO Jason Levesque. There also will be work-from-home opportunities, he said.

Working with iYogi, Argo already launched a pilot program that started with 10 workers to prove that the model of Maine workers in an "iYogi environment" will work, Levesque said.

More U.S. workers will be hired if the larger concept works, Dhar said.

"Customers themselves don't want a scripted service call, he said.

iYogi is different from many India-based companies that provide technical support via telephone, computer chats or email because it works directly with consumers who sign contracts instead of doing work for larger companies.

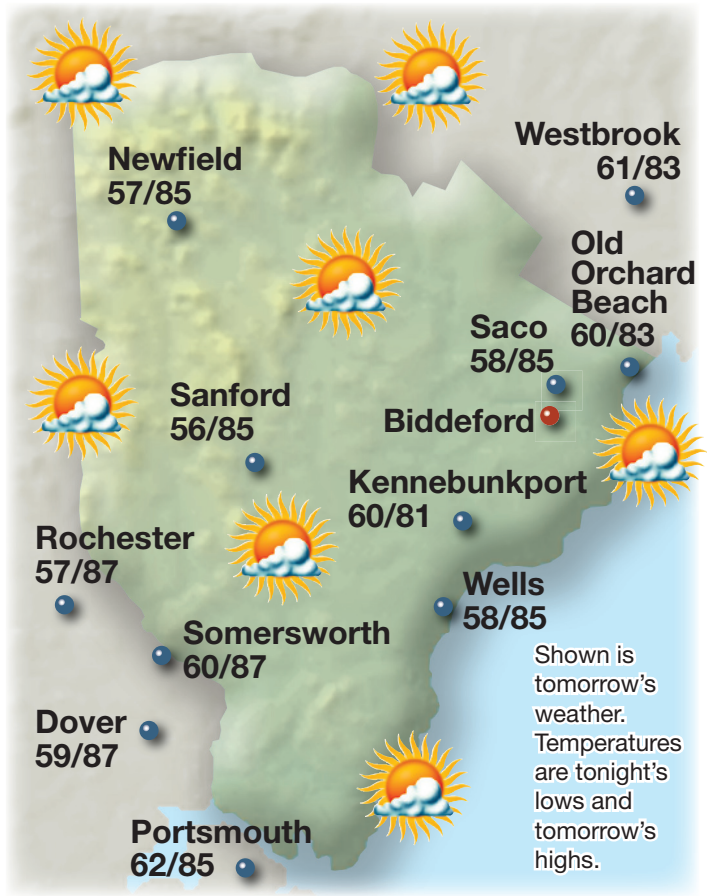
The company supports a range of products including computers, phones and other electronic devices. It currently has 3 million tech support customers, mostly in North America, and 5,000 customer support workers outside the U.S. The company also has 1,500 contract workers who provide on-site technical support in the U.S.

BIDDEFORD AREA FORECAST

AccuWeather.com

TONIGHT	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Clear to partly cloudy	Partly sunny	Mostly sunny and very warm	Clouds and sunshine
▼ 58°	▲ 85° ▼ 61°	▲ 88° ▼ 64°	▲ 82° ▼ 63°

Today's Forecast



Tide Report

Kennebunkport:

Day	Time	High	Time	Low
Fri.	6:53 a.m.	8.8	12:42 a.m.	0.1
	7:24 p.m.	9.8	1:01 p.m.	0.1
Sat.	8:00 a.m.	8.6	1:47 a.m.	0.0
	8:25 p.m.	9.8	2:02 p.m.	0.3

Old Orchard Beach:

Day	Time	High	Time	Low
Fri.	6:37 a.m.	9.1	12:20 a.m.	0.1
	7:08 p.m.	10.1	12:39 p.m.	0.1
Sat.	7:44 a.m.	8.9	1:25 a.m.	0.0
	8:09 p.m.	10.1	1:52 p.m.	0.3

Marine Forecast

Eastport to Merrimac River

Wind west 6-12 knots tonight. Seas 1-3 feet. Mainly clear. Wind west 4-8 knots tomorrow. Seas 1-3 feet. Visibility clear. Wind southwest 6-12 knots tomorrow night. Seas 1-3 feet. Mainly clear. Sunday: Wind southwest 6-12 knots. Seas 1-3 feet. Visibility clear. Sunday night: Wind southwest 6-12 knots. Seas 1-3 feet. Water temperature: 59.

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