SHARK BIOLOGY & MARINE CONSERVATION FIELD COURSE

SUMMER FIELD COURSE DATES - 2026:

CAMP 1: (June 2 - 6)

CAMP 2: (June 16 - 20)

CAMP 3: (June 29 - July 3)

SUMMER FIELD COURSE COST: $2,500 per student

Deposit: $1,250.00 Due Upon Enrollment / Registration
Final Payment: $1,250.00 Due March1st, 2026

Our first year of offering summer field courses in 2023 was a massive success, and so Ocean First Institute is excited to again in 2026 offer research-intensive summer field courses. Field courses are intended for individuals looking to gain experience as marine biologists, with a focus on sharks and human impact research. You'll do a deep dive with Ocean First Institute research scientists and MarineLab staff into the nearshore coastal ecology of Key Largo, FL, spending time exploring its beautiful mangrove, seagrass, and reef habitats and the sharks that call it home. We'll also explore the many ways that humans continue to reshape these environments, and you'll assist in conducting research that is critical to understanding and minimizing negative impacts.

PROGRAM INCLUSIONS:

- Dorm-style lodging at MarineLab
- All meals on-site (lunches will be bagged and brought into the field)
- Ocean First Institute T-shirt
- Experience working on a research vessel
- Experience catching (longlines, drum lines, hand lines) and handling sharks
- Deploy and analyze Baited Remote Underwater Videos (BRUVS) to survey for the presence and abundance of sharks
- Data collection
- Shark tagging, tissue sample collection, and sample processing
- MarineLab Activities:
    - Lecture on Florida Keys habitats and immersive field trip to nearby coastal habitats on MarineLab vessel

NOT INCLUDED:

- Personal Snorkel Gear: Mask, fins, and snorkel to take home. Note: You are welcome to bring your own gear if you prefer. If you do not have your own, all necessary snorkel equipment will be provided during the program at no additional cost.

- Roundtrip Airfare and Transportation: Travel between Miami, Florida (or Key West) airports and Key Largo is not included. Transportation can be arranged for an additional fee if needed.

MEET YOUR EXPERTS:

Dr. Mikki McComb-Kobza

Mikki is a biologist specializing in applied conservation biology, particularly of endangered species and natural resources in marine ecosystems for over 20 years. Her research is focused primarily on the biology, behavior, abundance, and movement of sharks using novel technologies. The goal of her work is to support science based strategic conservation initiatives with multiple stakeholders. She has participated in or led over 40 under-sea expeditions, spanning the globe from Darwin to Cape Town, to Manaus, to Hong Kong, and along the east coast of North America from Nova Scotia to Belize.

Mikki is the CEO and Chief Scientist of Ocean First Institute, a 501c3 non-profit dedicated to marine research, conservation, and education. The Institute has reached thousands of students in local schools, and over 170,000 students in 35 countries and 46 US states with nationally acclaimed conservation projects and compelling educational programming. Her research has been covered by the BBC, National Geographic, Discovery Channel's Shark Week, and CBC National Radio Canada. She is also a faculty with CU Boulder in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, the president of the American Elasmobranch Society and National Fellow of the Explorer's Club.

Recently a featured speaker on TEDx Boulder and

Mikki holds a Ph.D. in Integrative Biology from Florida Atlantic University and is the author of numerous scientific publications.

Dr. Chris Malinowski

Chris is a biologist who is passionate about the conservation of marine and aquatic ecosystems.

His personal and career goal is to contribute in any way he can to minimize human impacts on these ecosystems and to work towards a more sustainable future for humans.

As such, he often engages with resource managers, the public, and students on conservation-related matters and he has numerous publications and ongoing research projects aimed at answering important ecological questions and at filling in knowledge gaps to inform conservation efforts. His passion has led to research spanning the depths of the oceans, the North American Great Lakes, and across coastal ecosystems; and from microscopic organisms like zooplankton to some of the largest and most charismatic creatures in the ocean like sharks, sea turtles, marine mammals, and large reef fish like the Atlantic Goliath Grouper. He focuses his research on foraging ecology, niche partitioning, effectiveness of management and enforcement, ecotoxicology, health physiology, spawning behavior and patterns, life history of fishes, population and community-level ecology, invasive species impacts, gut microbiome communities, effects of pollutants like microplastics/nanoparticles on food web ecology, and impacts of water quality on the behavior and health of fishes. He is also heavily involved in wildlife policy and management. His research has been featured in numerous magazine and newspaper articles and documentaries, including National Geographic among others. He is a member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) SSC Grouper and Wrasse Specialist Group, and he holds faculty status at both Florida International University and Florida Atlantic University.