

*Buzzzzzz!* Merlin the drone launches into the sky. The controller screen in my hands displays a bird's eye view of sandy shores and seafoam green waves. A grey-purple smudge slowly swishes in the corner.

*“Hey- is this what I think it is!?”*

*“Yeah! I think you just spotted a white shark!”*

This moment captures the thrill of my time with the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy(AWSC) as a MISS fellow. Who knew a conversation at the POSea conference would lead me to meet white sharks on Cape Cod? Assisting the research team was one of many roles I dived into this summer.

At the Shark Center, I worked with Ann, Annabelle, Luke, and Izzy to sharpen my public engagement skills. My fun fact was showing guests the shark printed on Filipino currency. With the Shark Smart interns, Eliza and Emma, I gained confidence in community outreach while centering public safety. I collaborated with Maddie and Marianne to design and illustrate the Gills Club activity book for youth ages 7-10. I was going to work more with the education team, but discovered that a room full of children + me in an educator position = panic attack. Kristen, Maeve, and Fiona were flexible and supportive of me during that time. Along with beach droning, I worked with researchers Ashleigh and Victoria to first, update 88 shark ID photo profiles and secondly, start illustrating an infographic showing how videos end up as data in the white shark log book. Even though I didn't work closely with Megan (the staff scientist), she was incredibly friendly and candid about the PhD student experience. The first time I ever cried over a publication was when her population study came out in the middle of summer. The cherry on top of all this was the opportunity to assist with the Diversifying Ocean Sciences Program. Meeting Amani and other MISS members *in person* while learning about marine technology is now a core memory that sends me waves of comfort!

Thanks to the generosity of MISS and AWSC, I was able to extend my fellowship from 6 to 13 weeks. Over the course of that time, I've honed my communication skills, met fin-tastic people, and weaved art and science into several masterpieces. A year ago I was a lab assistant with a bachelors in Marine Science studying intertidal anemones, snails, and limpets. Through MISS, I dived head first into sensational shark science and surfaced as a fired up artist and scientist. Stepping into the future, my goal is to use multi-modal art to increase accessibility to science for people and groups historically excluded from 'academia' with the intent of empowering them with connections and knowledge to protect what they love. I plan to apply for my masters degree in scientific illustration and someday do a PhD in conservation science. I can now envision myself soaring into a career of science communication- whether it be in shark science or beyond the elasmov-erse!