

**Sharks and Rays: Past and Present**

**Week 3**

**Importance of Recording Data**

**Melanie Stiassny, Ph.D.:**

This specimen, for example, was collected in 1911, on a major expedition with the *U.S.S. Albatross*, and you can see here just a few notes that were made at the time. In our computer database, if we were to type in this number, we could get all of the information that I was just telling you about, attached to this specimen. We know exactly where it was caught, and we know when it was caught. We can go back to that location, and we can fish again, and we can see what we get. And we can see whether this animal is still swimming in the waters there, or perhaps not. Particularly in freshwater ecosystems, and, very sadly, throughout much of the tropical world, when we go back to the locations from which we took specimens for our collections in the '20s and '30s, we'll go back and we'll find that their habitat in which they were living has been completely destroyed, and they're no longer there. So really, we have an absolute baseline here. We know that in 1911, off the coast of Panama, at a particular rivermouth, there was a population of this animal.