

# ADVOCATING FOR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

EQUALLY AT EASE ON LAND AND SEA,  
EMMA CASAGRANDE CHANNELS HER INNER MERMAID

Perhaps the sea and the sun created a mermaid — eyes the color of plankton, hair as gold as rustling wheat, a smile that could light the night, a voice that lilts melodically when she speaks and a soul filled with the light of kindness.

Such is the delight that is Naples resident, Swedish-born Emma Casagrande. Her work as an underwater photographer captures her natural comfort on land and in the sea.

Casagrande often works in collaboration with her husband, Emmy Award-winning cinematographer Andy Casagrande IV. Their efforts have been featured in projects for *National Geographic*, Discovery Channel, the BBC and *èBella* magazine. This husband-and-wife team can vast the globe to capture nature in its purest form.

“When I was 3 years old, my parents and I left Arvika/Varmland and lived in the African Congo for three years. It was a super happy time for me,” she began.

“My parents did missionary work there. My father worked with their hospitals and my mom helped women become more independent by teaching them how to sew. I thoroughly enjoyed the country, the animals and the people. Because of that experience, I learned to appreciate big, bright smiles and those who work hard, have an open heart and a desire to build a sense of connection in the community. I watched women bring water to their village and everyone helped care for children and the elderly. The people coexisted with animals in their natural state, which was so important for a young girl to see. Besides the importance of working together,



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With tools of their trade, Emma and Andy Casagrande savor the life they have created with their children, Nova and Ace.



I also learned there is little difference between what animals and people need. Coming into every day with calmness and patience is actually good for both groups. What I experienced at 3 years of age still guides my life today.”

Casagrande’s work with natural predators has become not only a focus, but also a passion.

“I became a certified scuba diver at the age of 21, while I was visiting Thailand. That underwater world is colorful, beautiful and peaceful. However, the reefs, like the shark, are endangered, and need to be protected. And both are important. We need to learn to coexist with the shark. They have been here since before the dinosaur,” she said.

“They are robust and have endurance. We have so much to learn from them so we can live longer, disease-free lives. However, it is common that things we don’t understand, like the shark, often cause people to feel afraid. Many people are scared of them and they think these gentle predators want to eat us. We are not

on their menu,” she said with an understanding smile.

“But, sometimes, the shark makes a mistake. On the West Coast, in California, there are seals. So sharks may think the black fabric of a scuba suit moving on top of the water could be a seal, which is their food. But here, we have no seals. However, light shimmering colors in the water at dusk could look like a fish. So, please don’t look like their food when you are in their region.”

Casagrande offers bits of wisdom and insight that seem far beyond her years, but not her experience. The ability to search for and highlight the best trait in all beings is carried throughout her work as a photographer, partner, wife, mother and collaborator.

“Everyone has something wonderful and good in them. Sometimes you must look for it, but it’s always there to find.”

She and Andy, along with their two children (Nova, 3, and Ace, 5), travel the world, often with Casagrande’s mother on hand.

“We are a good team,” she said. “My mom still lives in Sweden and bringing her along on our travels makes me happy. It’s good for all of us and gives my children special time with their grandma. The kids can experience the world with us by their side.”

Together, this young family has traveled to South Africa, Sweden, the Bahamas, Mauritius, Costa Rica and various spots within the United States.

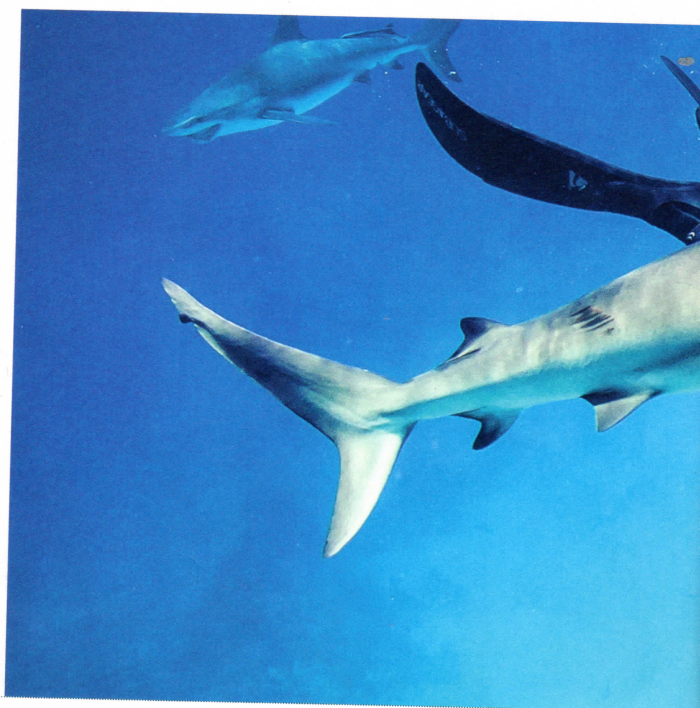
“When kids are around a loving hand, things are perfect no matter where you are in the world,” she offered. “That is what my parents taught me, and now we teach the same to our children.”

Like the surf that gently tugs at the sand, Casagrande’s insights regarding life and love flow effortlessly.

“I met Andy in the middle of Africa in the Serengeti National Park,” she said. “He was on a three-month assignment with a team from National Geographic and was filming ‘The Lions of the Super Pride.’ I was traveling through Tanzania with my cousins and two girlfriends and arrived, quite unexpectedly for them,

(Below left) Emma Casagrande felt a sense of connection while living as a young girl in a Congo community.

(Below) The Shark Angels board member advocates respect for our oceans and sharks.





at their film camp in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by lions and giraffes. It was love at first sight for Andy and me.

“Although I dearly love my home country and my family in Sweden, I ultimately left to make a life with him. We have found a sense of belonging in Naples, where Andy has a large family, although I feel connected to everywhere I have lived. We have made this beautiful city with its Gulf sunsets and lush Everglades our home. But it helps to know that Sweden is only a plane ride away.”

As a supporter of healthy environments in the land, sea and air, Casagrande hopes her work and her voice will help bring much-needed light to the necessity for clean waterways and air. As a board member for Shark Angels, she is passionate about spreading knowledge so she may inspire care for our oceans and sharks.

Additionally, Casagrande serves as a role model for equal treatment for women and mothers, whether they work corporately or at home. To further this effort, she and collaborator

Jessica LeBrun are beginning an online magazine, *Nixie*, due out in October. “Girl power is so important,” she said with a grin. “I think women can do anything by believing they can make it happen, and then being strong, smart and hardworking.”

She demonstrated this belief as her career evolved. Before she was a photographer, Casagrande was a hairdresser in Sweden. She stated that the transition between the two professions was not difficult, because she recognized that skills necessary in the first translated to success in the second. Transcending lines, varying degrees of color, levels of movement, quality of light and composition of traditional-versus-creative design are as paramount in the execution of a perfect hairstyle as in capturing a single complex moment on film.

She used her insight to connect the dots. As a co-founder of Naples Coastal Art (along with Monet Layton and Ann-Marie Thomas), she created an opportunity to combine her talents in photography and nature with other artistic disciplines.

Casagrande brings her creative, gentle and accepting insight into everything she touches, seeing the world as her own canvas.

“I am rarely afraid of anything. To me, the world has no limits, no boundaries. I don’t see lines between countries or between people. I see one big, beautiful world, where everyone is really the same: One global community, where we share love and care. I am thrilled to be part of it all.”

With that lasting piece of wisdom, the gentle mermaid slides back into the sea. ☼

### Shark Education and Advocacy

Emma Casagrande is a present board member with Shark Angels. The 501(c)(3) organization is dedicated to defending the sharks by serving as their guardian angels by providing education through various media. For more information, visit [SharkAngels.org](http://SharkAngels.org).

(Below right) Emma Casagrande, along with her children, Ace and Nova, examine the beauty of a shark.

