

ACTIVITY: Fishing

CASE GSAF 1978.10.21

DATE: Saturday October 21, 1978

LOCATION: The incident took place on the southern bank of the St. Lucia Estuary, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

NAME: Mr. Kuppasamy

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Third Quarter, October 24, 1978

WATER CONDITIONS: Due to the proximity of the Umfolozi River, the water in that sector of the estuarine system is extremely turbid. During the October rainy season water visibility is zero.

ENVIRONMENT: The area is well-known for its abundance of sharks, crocodiles and hippos.

TIME: Dusk

NARRATIVE: Mr. Kuppasamy and his nephew had been fishing in the estuary. The nephew returned to their camp site to prepare dinner while Mr. Kuppasamy continued to fish. When his nephew last saw him alive, Mr. Kuppasamy had his fishing rod, tackle box, a bottle of can spirits (an alcoholic beverage) and a large amount of cash.

Next morning, the nephew contacted the Natal Parks, Game and Fish Preservation Board to report that his uncle failed to return to their camp site. Investigators found Kuppasamy's fishing rod and tackle box on the southern bank of the estuary. They also found female foot prints and signs that a scuffle had taken place, and campers in the vicinity reported that they had heard the terrified screams of a man around dusk the previous evening. "Drowning victims shout for help, but people who face a shark invariably scream," noted John Daniel of the Natal Parks Board.

INJURY: On October 24, Mr. Kuppasamy's body was found floating face downwards in the estuary. His left arm had been severed and his thorax and abdomen had been bitten by shark/s but it was impossible to determine whether the injuries had been inflicted before or after death. Two large symmetrical bites on his torso were broad with a shallow curve; they were characteristic of the bite pattern of a blunt-snouted shark and the edges of the wound had a distinct cicatrice pattern. There was no evidence of a crocodile bite.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Walter Pople, Research Officer of the Natal Sharks Board, believed the bites were those of a tiger shark about three metres in length.

CASE INVESTIGATORS: John Daniel, Natal Parks Board, Walter Pople and Graeme Charter, Natal Sharks Board

