

**ACTIVITY:** Standing

**CASE:** GSAF 1990.04.08

**DATE:** Sunday April 8, 1990

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Coral Sea at Dingo Reef, 80 nautical miles off Townsville, Queensland, Australia.

**NAME:** Robert Bullen

**DESCRIPTION:** He was a 37-year-old male, an experienced diver. He had moved from Tasmania to Townsville the previous week.

#### **BACKGROUND**

**MOON PHASE:** Full Moon, April 10, 1990

**ENVIRONMENT:** The diver disappeared on the seaward side of the reef.

**DEPTH OF WATER:** Waist-deep

**NARRATIVE:** Bullen was a trochus-shell diver, a free-diver (no scuba). He was seen standing in the water, adjusting his mask and snorkel, moments before Steve Woolhead, skipper of the *Bonny Kay*, heard a short cry. When Woolhead looked around, Bullen was gone.

Townsville police conducted a three-day search for the diver without success, but sharks up to two metres in length were seen around the fishing boat from which he disappeared. Inspector Bensley of the Townsville police thought the most logical explanation for the diver's disappearance was a shark attack but was unable to explain why there was no sign of a struggle. Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority research section officer, Brian Lassig, said it would be highly unlikely for sharks that size to attack in shallow waters without leaving a trace. "To have a shark swallow you whole, it would have to be about 16 to 18 feet (about 6m) long and you don't get too many of them going on to reefs. Anything smaller, you would expect there to be goggles or blood or some sort of sign."

**SOURCE:** Leisa Scott, Courier-Mail, Thursday April 12, 1990, page 5

