

ACTIVITY: Fishing

CASE: **GSFAF 1998.08.27**

DATE: Thursday August 27, 1998

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Adriatic Sea, 12 miles off Senigallia, Marches Region, Italy.

BOAT: A 30-foot cabin cruiser owned by Stefano Catalani.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: First Quarter, August 30, 1998

NARRATIVE: Catalani and his 10-year-old son caught a sand shark and strapped it to the side of the boat, which attracted the larger white shark. The shark seized a container with bait, consumed the sand shark, and circled the boat.

INJURY: No injury to occupants, nor did the shark 'attack' the boat.; it merely ate their catch.

SPECIES: The incident was said to involve a 20-foot [six-metre] white shark.



Senigallia, Marches coast

Shark attack on boat 'result of global warming'

THIRTY miles of beach along Italy's coast were closed to swimmers yesterday after a 20ft great white shark attacked a cabin cruiser 12 miles off shore.

It is the first sighting in the Adriatic of the white shark, the species that features in the film *Jaws* and which is found in the Mediterranean. Experts said global warming was affecting the territorial spread of the shark and predicted it would move into British waters within 10 years.

The shark was captured on video by Stefano Catalani, an amateur fisherman, when it attacked his boat off the resort of Senigallia. As a result, authorities have banned swimming along much of coast of the Marches region, from Marotta, 30 miles south of Rimini, to Civitanova, south of Ancona.

Video footage of the attack against Mr. Catalani's 30ft boat was shown on Italian television at the weekend. The white shark besieged the cruiser on Thursday after the fisherman and his son Nicola, 10, caught a sand shark and strapped it to the side of the boat. Attracted by its blood, the white shark suddenly appeared in the water alongside. Mr. Catalani, a farm manager, said: "All at once, I saw this large grayish fin."

After seizing a container of bait, the shark then turned its attention to the small shark. But after devouring it, the white shark began circling the boat. Fascinated, Mr. Catalani filmed the entire incident from the bridge, and only headed back to port at the urging of his son. Mr. Catalani was later criticized for failing to report the incident immediately to the nearest port authority. But in an interview yesterday, he said he informed the skipper of a passing boat and, amid laughter, was told that he "should have left the wine at home".

Authorities at the weekend played down the danger to bathers, saying that white sharks rarely attacked humans and preferred deep water. However, an expert, Giuseppe Notabartolo, said: "Everyone says sharks like deep water. But it is a falsehood that is convenient for the tour agencies. In reality, the shark is a typical predator of river-mouths, and whose instinct is to approach the coast to strike. Luckily, it usually overlooks humans." Corrado Piccinetti, head of the Marine Biology Laboratory in Fano, near Senigallia, said: "Sharks are erratic animals, and they go where they can find food. We'll keep coming across this one all through September until he finds something to eat. Perhaps he'll move [north] to the Po delta."

Colin Speedie, a marine expert with the Cornwall and Devon Wildlife Trust's Marine Section, said yesterday: "The appearance of a great white shark in the Adriatic is extremely rare indeed. The white shark has been widespread in parts of the Mediterranean, but not in the Adriatic. There is concern for the species. Researchers are trying to find out why their numbers are diminishing in the Mediterranean."

Scientists at the National Marine Aquarium at Plymouth have said that the onset of global warming was affecting the territorial spread of great white sharks. They predicted that the species, as it followed the shoals of smaller fish on which it feeds, would reach British waters within a decade.

SOURCE: Bruce Johnston in Rome, August 31, 1998, *Water and Woods*.

Shark attack on boat 'result of global warming'

By Bruce Johnston in Rome

August 31, 1998

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