

ACTIVITY: Freediving, spearfishing & taking underwater photographs

CASE: GSAF 2004.05.18

DATE: Tuesday May 18, 2004

LOCATION: The incident took place at Green Turtle Cay, Abaco, Bahamas.

NAME: Wolfgang Leander

DESCRIPTION: The diver, a 63-year-old male, is 168 cm tall and weighs 59 kg. He was wearing a black wetsuit, black mask and grey fins, and carrying a five-foot pole spear. He wore no jewelry and had no injuries prior to the incident.

SUPPORT BOAT: An 18-foot white-hulled Wellcraft fishing boat.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was partly cloudy, air temperature was 25°C, and there was a 20 mph northeast wind.

MOON PHASE: New Moon, May 19, 2004

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was bluish / turquoise and choppy with five- to six-foot waves. Sea temperature was 22°C (estimated) and underwater visibility was 50 feet.

ENVIRONMENT: The diver shot a parrotfish and it was still on his spear when the incident took place.

DISTANCE FROM BOAT: 15 metres

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 1,000 metres

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: 25 to 30 feet, but the incident took place on the surface.

TIME: 15h00

NARRATIVE: The diver had been alone in the water for 30 minutes, and nobody was on the boat, when the incident took place. He describes the event:

“I was spearing fish to attract and photograph sharks. The shark that bit me made a few passes to get the fish on the spear. I held the spear away so it could not get the fish right away. After two attempts to grab the fish, the shark bit me in the left arm (forearm) with which I was holding the speared fish. At that very same time another Caribbean reef shark, maybe a four-footer, took the fish from the spear.”

“The shark that bit me did not attempt to bite a second time. It was either a test bite or, what I assume, an angry bite out of frustration when it could not get the fish on the spear. A hungry dog would react the same way if I had teased it with a bone.”

“The wound, a fairly deep, clean cut, started to bleed profusely (I am taking blood-thinning pills due to a heart problem I had), and I found myself in a cloud of blood. Four other sharks



“This is pretty much what I did when I got bitten; I attracted the shark with a speared fish, then held the fish out of the water so the shark would not be able to grab it at once. The problem with this year’s incident was that the shark was hungry and did not have any experience with me, whereas the sharks I interacted with last year were rather relaxed, not very hungry, and used to my presence. These were sharks that I saw for about three weeks every day in the same area. (an area of about 1 km²).”

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were at the site, including a seven-foot Caribbean reef shark and an eight-foot lemon shark. Although I know that sharks do not seem to particularly like human blood, I was a bit worried about the fact that the speared fish had already attracted the sharks to the scene. But no, none of them followed me as I was swimming backwards to the boat.”

“This incident, NOT an attack, was totally self-provoked. Since I have been feeding sharks off my spear hundreds of times before, I felt very confident with what I was doing. I know that this happened because I teased the shark and did not let it have the fish on its first attempt to take it. (Go to my website: www.oceanicdreams.com, and click the section “karin” - there you will find some pics of me feeding Caribbean reef sharks off my spear).”

“THIS IS A CLEAR CASE WHERE I SHOULD SAY: ‘BLAME THE VICTIM, NOT THE PERPETRATOR!!!!’”, says the diver.

INJURY: The diver’s left forearm was lacerated but no tissue was lost.

TREATMENT: X-rays were taken but no tooth fragments were found. The diver’s injury was surgically repaired by Dr. Jesse O. Basadre in Miami, Florida.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The incident involved a Caribbean reef shark, *Carcharhinus perezii*, five feet in length.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Marie Levine, GSAF



“Sometimes I had many many sharks around me, all attracted with some speared fish, none aggressive, as they knew me. At least that is what I believe.”



“My lady gently taking the bait.”



“I took all these pics with one hand (the right one).”



“Again, feeding my big lady.”



“To be honest, I was a bit nervous when I took this one. You can tell, a bit blurry, a bit out of focus...the shark almost bumped me frontally.”



"My wife Karin took all these pics. First time she was close to sharks and her first underwater pictures."



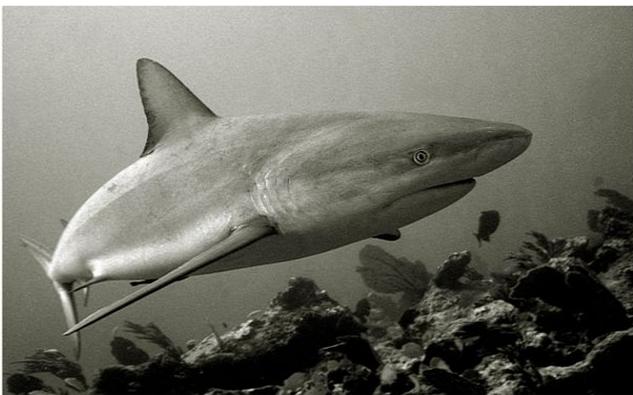
"This is what I have been doing hundreds of times."



"Here is another one ..."



"See the speared fish next to my snorkel?"



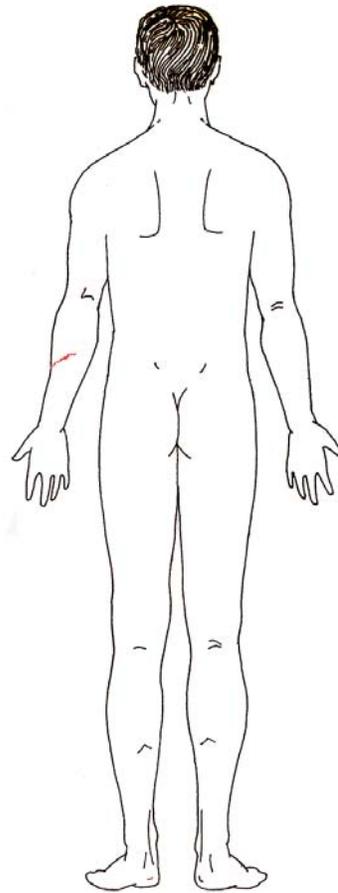
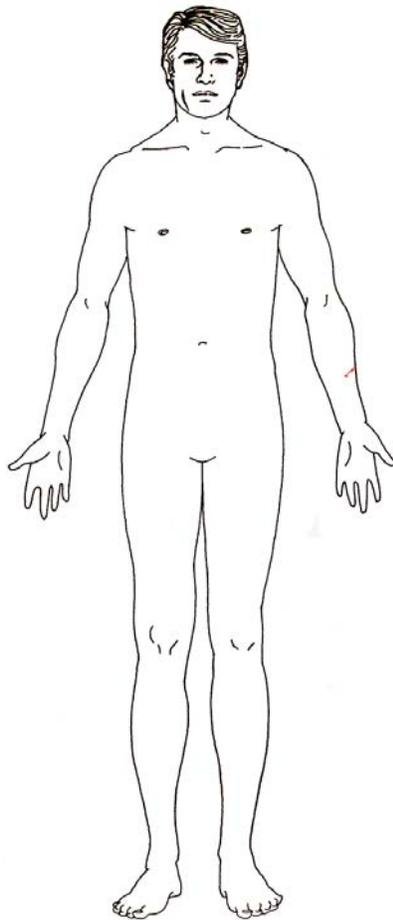
"This was a beautiful 7-8 ft. lady; saw her every day during the three weeks. No bait, no pics like this one — It's as simple as that. ... Wolfgang Leander"



"Normally no problems whatsoever."



"I had only one cut across the arm. The surgeon had to make two additional cuts in order to suture the severed muscles - hence the "Z" shape of the scar. The mark of Zorro."



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