

ACTIVITY: Fishing

CASE: [GSAF 2005.03.09](#)

DATE: Wednesday March 9, 2005

LOCATION: The incident took place at the Waiapu River on the remote East Cape, North Island, New Zealand.

NAMES / DESCRIPTIONS: The incident involved four Maori fishermen from Tikitiki: Chris Lima Haenga, Wayne Rangihuna, Paul Tangaere and Tamahau Tibble.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was "a good day", according Paul. It was sunny and hot with "a bit of wind".

MOON PHASE: New Moon, March 10, 2005

ENVIRONMENT: The river channel at the mouth is 30 metres in width. Paul described the beach as "dangerous" due to currents. There was no bird activity, nor were any dolphins present.

TIME: 14h00



NARRATIVE: Sergeant Edward Keelan of the Ruatoria police said the men were going to pull a net in when the shark got tangled in it and headed out to sea.

Paul was on the shore, three men were in the water: Wayne was in the sea, Chris (the net owner) was in the sea with the net, and Tamahau was on an inflatable black rubber tyre.

Usually the party fish 10 metres out, intercepting the fish as they move from the sea into the river. There were fish in the net, but the net had drifted out further than was usual. Paul saw the shark and shouted a warning which nobody heard. The shark came from the sea side of the net, became entangled and thrashed wildly.

A rope broke between the net and the tyre, and Tamahau drifted away on the tyre. Chris, unwilling to let go of the net, was dragged seawards; and Wayne, who was in the water from the beginning, swam out to the vicinity of the net.

Paul, worried about his friend Tamahau, entered the water and swam out about 150 metres (half-way to Tamahau who was now 300 metres from shore). When Tamahau shouted that he was OK, Paul returned to shore, describing his condition as "knackered". Paul said that both Wayne and Tamahau were good swimmers (better than him).

The shark dragged the net about 350 metres out to sea before ripping it, and swimming free. The shark was not seen again.

"Very quickly [the fishermen] decided that it might be best to start heading into shore," said Mr. Keelan. Someone on shore saw the men struggling against strong winds to get back in and called police. A helicopter was about to be dispatched when the men made it to shore,

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helped by a turning tide. "After 90 minutes they made it to shore, very tired but with all limbs attached," said Mr. Keelan.

INJURY: All returned safely to shore without injury.

DAMAGE TO EQUIPMENT: The tyre was pictured on the TV news, so that was brought ashore, but the net was lost.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The incident involved a dark-coloured requiem shark between seven and 14 feet in length, possibly a bronze whaler. The shark was probably attracted by struggling fish in the net.

Paul described the shark as "black" and "thrashing" but had "no idea" as to what species it was. He it was bigger than Wayne (6ft 3in) and Wayne told him the shark was 14 feet in length. I asked Paul if he had seen the shark's tail, which he had. I asked him to recall the tail and if the two lobes were of equal size. Without prompting he told me the upper lobe was larger. I suggested the shark was not a great white but could have been a bronze whaler. Paul agreed with this, relating that somebody else had suggested that the shark was a bronze whaler.

NOTE: This is considered a provoked incident because it involved a netted shark.

SOURCES: The incident was reported by Dominion Post & Otago Daily Times. TV1 News also ran the story (Mar 10, 2005) on their 6 pm and 10.30 pm reports. All described a party of three in a boat, being dragged out to sea by a shark caught in a net. The actual reporting on the television was inaccurate because no boat was involved.

SOURCES: <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3212308a11,00.html>. Paul Tangaere was interviewed by telephone on Saturday March 12, 2004 by R.D. Weeks of the GSAF.

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