

ACTIVITY: Scuba diving

CASE: [GSAF 2005.08.24.b](#)

DATE: Wednesday August 24, 2005

LOCATION: The attack took place in the Gulf of St. Vincent off Glenelg, South Australia, Australia.

34°59'S

NAME: Jarrod Stehbens

DESCRIPTION: He was a 23-year-old marine biologist and an experienced diver. He was an honours student at the University of Adelaide and was employed by the university to help carry out research projects. Educated at the Beachport Primary School and then the Kangaroo Inn Area School, before going on to a degree in marine biology at Flinders University, he was due to leave for Germany in two weeks to undertake a PhD at the Alfred-Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research on the North Sea island of Helgoland, off the German coast.

SUPPORT BOAT: A six-metre aluminium boat with twin outboard motors.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Last Quarter, August 27, 2005

ENVIRONMENT: The Glenelg tyre reef, established in 1983, is made up of a series of tyre tetrahedrons on the ocean floor. It serves as a breeding ground for a number of marine species: whiting, bullsyes, strongies, silver dimmer, old wives and spider crabs. Dolphins were also in the area and had been frolicking with the divers.

It was reported that as many as 30 boats were fishing in the area, some of which were chumming. Keith Lemasz, 57, was fishing about 100 metres from the researchers when the attack occurred. "I didn't see anything at all until all the choppers started flying over us," he said.

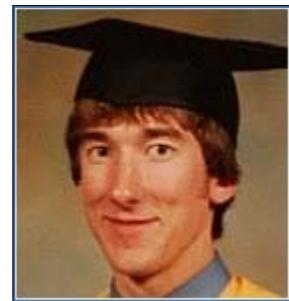
DISTANCE FROM SHORE: Five or six kilometers

DISTANCE FROM BOAT: 50 to 70 metres

DEPTH OF WATER: 17 to 18 metres, but the attack took place five metres from the surface.

TIME: 16h10

NARRATIVE: Four research scientists from the University of Adelaide were diving to collect cuttlefish eggs on the Glenelg tyre reef: Jarrod Stehbens, Justin Rowntree, Melita De Vries and Bayden Russell. They had set out around 09h30 and dived at two other sites without incident. At the time of the attack, Melita and Bayden were on the boat. Rowntree and Stehbens had been in the water for about 40 minutes when Russell saw a "large grey



Jarrod Stehbens

shape” above the divers and headed towards them. The two divers were ascending when Rowntree felt an impact to his back, which was forceful enough to rotate him in the water as the shark brushed passed him. and thought it was one of the dolphins. “I looked around (and saw) just a big white mass.” he said. Then the shark went for Stehbens who tried to strike it on the snout. “Jarrod fought the shark off initially, then it came back again and grabbed his leg below the knee and just took him deeper,” said Rowntree. “He seemed quite calm. He was trying to get his leg out of its mouth. He was a distance from me and then out of sight. I surfaced and called for help.”

De Vries and Russell witnessed the attack from the boat. De Vries said it was all over in seconds: “Next instant there was a commotion in the water. Both of us were facing the other way at the time, we turned back around and saw a tail fin come out of the water and a split second after we went what is it what is it oh my God.” “We never saw the whole shark.” Bayden said. “There was no time.” The attack only lasted seconds.



Photo: David Mariuz

Police examine the boat used by divers when one of them was taken by a shark off Glenelg.

When Rowntree surfaced he was hauled on board the boat by his colleagues. The trio unsuccessfully searched the area in the boat.

INJURY: Presumed fatal. Stehbens’ air tank, regulator and buoyancy compensator were recovered but no trace of the diver was found despite an intensive air / sea search.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The incident involved a white shark estimated to be five metres in length.

SOURCES: The Age, August 25, 2005; Finding of Inquest held February 25, 26, 27 and 29, 2008 and March 14, 2008.

NOTE: Next day, David Stehbens, Jarrod's father, said he had discussed with his son the merits of a shark cull in December when Nick Peterson was killed while being towed on his surfboard by a motorized dinghy [GSAF 2004.12.16]. “He's a marine biologist; he wouldn't want anything killed like that,” his father said. “Jarrod was doing exactly what he wanted to do when this happened. He loved the sea, loved anything to do with water, boats and helping out other people. He was helping them on their projects.” Both family and friends said Jarrod wouldn't want the shark killed. Said Bayden, “Jarrod would be absolutely appalled that anyone would be proposing that, he loved the marine environment. It was what he loved.”

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Bob Myatt, Global Shark Accident File