

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: 2006.08.29.a

DATE: Tuesday August 29, 2006

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Southern Ocean at Pennington Bay, Kangaroo Island, South Australia.

NAME: Brad Jamieson

DESCRIPTION: He is a 28-year-old male, 186 cm in height and weighs 90 kilograms. He was wearing a 4/3-thick black steamer wetsuit with grey trimmings, only his hands and feet were exposed.

SURFBOARD: A 6'3" white triffin.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: At 15h00, Cape Willoughby weather station (see circled area on map above) recorded an air temperature of 53°F [12°C], dew point 50°F [10°C], humidity 85%, sea level pressure 30.48 inches [1032 hPa], and wind direction was WSW at 4.6 mph [7.4 km/h]. The surfer reported that the sky was clear at Pennington Bay.

MOON PHASE: Waxing Crescent, 24% of the Moon was illuminated.

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea surface was "a bit untidy, not choppy, just somewhere in between." The surfer estimated the swell height to be about 1.75 m to 2.5 m. Underwater visibility was excellent, about 20 metres or more.

ENVIRONMENT: Kangaroo Island lies at the entrance of the Gulf of Saint Vincent, approximately 13 km offshore from Cape Jervis at the tip of the Fleurieu Peninsula. The island is approximately 155 km in length, 50 km at its widest, and 4350 square km in area.

The surfer writes, "A shark of the same size and description spooked two surfers the next day in the same place."

The surfer did not observe any unusual bird activity or birds on the surface of the water. Brad, a regular surfer in the area, remarked that he generally sees big schools of salmon in the area, but on this particular occasion he didn't notice any despite the clarity of the water.

He was 30 metres from a reef which extended right in towards the shore. He said that in order to get out to the waves, he had to walk along the top of the reef then jump into the water with his board. The surrounding sea bed (and directly beneath him) consisted of sand.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 30 metres

DEPTH OF WATER: 2.5 metres

TIME: 16h00

NARRATIVE: Brad Jamieson was sitting upright on his surfboard facing out to sea. His mate, Damien Burden, had just caught a wave just moments before and was paddling back towards Brad. Brad just happened to turn around and saw another friend, Dave Waldeck, rock up in the car park directly opposite him. At the time, Brad saw a large dark shadow three metres away and a metre below the surface. The shark was between Brad and the shore, heading seawards in his general direction, but just at that moment the shark turned 20 to 30 degrees and headed directly towards Brad, its approach speed comparable to a fast walking pace.

Dave was in the car park when he saw the shark approaching Brad and yelled out to him to start paddling. Brad decided to sit still on his board, and reached forward on his board and braced himself.

The shark's nose just breached the surface by a few centimetres, Brad yelled "Shark!" and gently pushed the shark with his board. The shark veered away, swam about a metre, then made a tight 180-degree turn (its speed still remaining the same as the initial approach) and came at him again. The second approach and contact was the same as the first.

The shark made a third approach and, on contact, Brad lifted his board up slightly and hit the shark on top of its head. It was then that the shark's speed increased as it dived down and became entangled in the surfer's leg rope. As result, Brad was dragged several metres through the water and his board was momentarily pulled beneath the surface. "I was pretty much submerged then, still on my board but just my head above water," he said.

Brad remounted his board just as the shark came back up underneath him at a considerably increased speed and positioned itself alongside him for a brief moment giving Brad the opportunity to punch the shark "really hard" right between its left eye and gills. After the punch, Brad said the shark's tail flew up into the air, the shark made a 180-degree turn, made a big splash and then took off with a burst of speed, heading directly back out to deeper water. The surfer returned immediately to shore.

"We just got out of the water and laughed and laughed. I wasn't really that scared, except the first few seconds. The thing is, if Dave hadn't turned up when he did I might not have seen it behind me and it could have taken a bite of my feet or legs," Brad said. "Damien (who was swimming out to catch a wave and was only 10 to 15 metres away from Brad during the incident) just kept yelling 'how big is it'. He thought it had hold of me."

INJURY: No injury

SPECIES: The incident involved a bronze whaler shark about six feet in length.

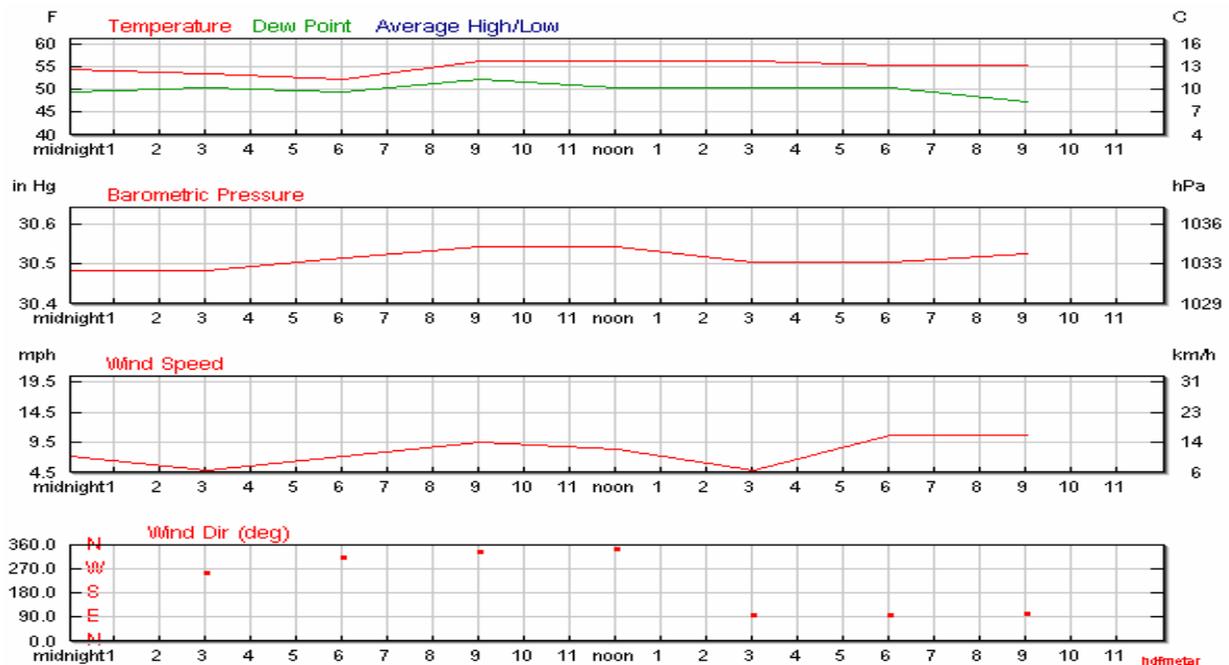
NOTE: Brad wasn't making any erratic movements, nor was Damien. Brad said the shark never made any attempts to bite him or the board, the shark just bumped the board on the first and second approaches. Even on the third and fourth approaches when the shark started to get more aggressive Brad said the shark didn't appear to have lifted its snout up to opened its mouth to take a bite.

Brad said his first intention was to give the shark a gentle nudge to keep the shark at bay, but after each consecutive approach he said the shark became more of a nuisance. When the shark came around for the fourth approach the shark was agitated and started to show more aggression.

It appears that the shark was not stalking the surfer; the fish just happened to come across Brad without being aware of his presence until Brad turned around to look for his friend Dave in the car park. The shark then approached the surfer through curiosity and ended up retaliating a bit after being fended off by Brad in the initial contact.

SOURCES: Shauna Black, The Islander (Kangaroo Island News), September 7, 2006, http://kangarooisland.yourguide.com.au/detail.asp?class=news&subclass=general&story_id=508038&category=General&m=9&y=2006;

Interview with Brad Jamieson by Phil Kemp on September 15, 2006.



Weather at Cape Willoughby, South Australia on August 29, 2006