

**CASE: GSAF 2008.01.14**

**DATE:** Monday January 14, 2008

**LOCATION:** Omaha Beach north of Auckland, North Island, New Zealand.

**BOAT:** A 3.8m inflatable rescue boat

**OCCUPANTS:** Two lifeguards: 19-year-old Lauren Johnson and 26-year-old Kris O'Neill.



**BACKGROUND**

**WEATHER:** At 14h00, Auckland recorded visibility of 31.1 miles [50 km]. The air temperature was 73.4°F [23°C], dew point 59°F [15°C], humidity 61%, sea level pressure 30.06 in [1018 hPa], and wind direction was SW at 8.1 mph [13 km/h].

**MOON PHASE:** First Quarter, January 16, 2008

**ENVIRONMENT:** It is believed the shark might have been lured into the area by bait in commercial crab pots.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 100 metres

**TIME:** 14h00

**NARRATIVE:** Lifeguards sighted a shark off the beach and launched an inflatable rescue boat to check the area and confirm that it was a shark that had been sighted. On approaching the area, O'Neill attempted to drive the shark seaward by revving the engine. Instead, the a shark bit the boat, puncturing the rear starboard pontoon where Johnson had been sitting. Then the shark attempted to bit the propeller and "head-butted" the bottom of the boat before swimming away. The lifeguards made it back to shore in the deflated boat and closed the beach. Lifeguards at Omaha Beach went out in the IRB in the afternoon to investigate sightings of a shark, and said they will head back out in the morning to see if the shark is still in the area, before reopening the beach.

**INJURY:** No injury to occupants.

**SPECIES:** The incident involved a four-metre bronze whaler shark. Malcolm Francis, a shark scientist with the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research, note that bronze whalers are rarely aggressive, but could bite if they felt threatened. "It was probably just swimming along quietly looking for some kahawai to eat, then along comes this great big orange thing and starts annoying it," Mr Francis said.

**SOURCES:** <http://www.stuff.co.nz/4356206a10.html>;

[http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/1/story.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10486873](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/1/story.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10486873)

<http://nz.news.yahoo.com/080114/2/3l3h.html>;<http://www.tv3.co.nz/News/NationalNews/Beachclosedaftersharkattacksinflatableboat/tabid/423/articleID/43447/cat/64/Default.aspx>each closed after shark attacks inflatable boat

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Richard D. Weeks, Global Shark Accident File.



*Johnson and O'Neill and the damaged pontoon.*