



ACTIVITY: Wading

CASE: [GSAF 2009.03.16.R](#)

DATE: Reported March 16, 2009

LOCATION: The accident took place in the Indian Ocean near the Natural Jetty at Rottneest Island. Rottneest Island is located 300 kilometres west of Perth, Western Australia, Australia.

NAME: Not identified

DESCRIPTION: He is a 21-year-old male.

BACKGROUND

DEPTH OF WATER: Knee-two-foot shark.

TIME: 11h30

NARRATIVE: The man trod on the shark and it bit him.

INJURY: The man was bitten on his upper thigh.

TREATMENT: The man was taken to the Rottneest Nursing Post where his wound was repaired with 15 sutures.

SPECIES: The incident involved a 60 cm [two-foot]wobbegong shark.

NOTE: This is a provoked incident; the shark bit the man after he stepped on it..

Rottnest shark attack was 'self-defence': expert

A shark believed responsible for attacking a 21 year-old man at Rottnest on the weekend would have been acting in self-defence, a leading shark expert said today.

The man required 15 stiches after the shark bit him on the upper thigh, narrowly missing his groin.

The 21 year-old had been wading with friends in knee-deep water at about 11.30pm near the island's Natural Jetty when he trod on the shark.

The 60cm creature, understood to be a wobbegong, leapt from the water before biting the victim on the thigh.

Senior shark research scientist with the Department of Fisheries Rory McAuley said wobbegongs were sedentary bottom dwelling creatures that rarely attacked people.

"If you tread on a wobbegong it is likely to react but so are a lot of other marine animals," Dr McAuley said.

"There are any number of things that will bite you if you tread on them in shallow water including scorpion fish, sea urchins and small reef sharks.

"Generally wobbegongs are sedentary species and will mind their own business. If this guy had put his foot down either side of the shark it probably would not have reacted and the guy wouldn't even have known it was there."

Wobbegongs are a family of sharks that inhabit shallow coastal waters and eat small wriggling animals like squid or octopus. They have small needle like teeth and thick skins.

There are at least six species of wobbegong in WA waters and none are protected. The sharks are caught by recreational and commercial fishers but are not targeted. They can be consumed by humans and have a high quality flesh but it is often difficult to cut. Dr McAuley said there was an average of one report a year of a person being injured by a wobbegong in WA.

SOURCE: Jane Hammond, The West, March 16, 2009, <http://www.thewest.com.au/default.aspx?MenuID=77&ContentID=130301>