

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: GSAF 2010.12.03.R

DATE: Reported December 3, 2010

LOCATION: Balian Beach, West Bali, Bali, Indonesia.

NAME: Wei Ong

DESCRIPTION: He was a male from Perth, Western Australia, and was staying at Istana Balian.



BACKGROUND

SEA CONDITIONS: Recent rains produced a lot of river run-off creating brown murky water.

NARRATIVE: The accident happened “as Wei Ong was paddling out, in very dirty murky waters from the rain, and felt a pull on his hand,” reported Michael Trott of Istana Balian.

“He said he felt no pain and when pulled his hand out of the water he had deep, obvious bite marks around his thumb area. Pretty freaked out he tried to paddle in but his hand was quite mangled and pieces felt like they were falling off. It took him around 20 minutes, paddling with only his left hand, to get back to shore, leaving a blood trail all the way. Wei saw nothing in the water and as quick as it happened, what ever it was, it was gone. “

INJURY: The surfer’s right hand was bitten.

TREATMENT: When the surfer reached shore he was helped and taken to Prima Medika Hospital where he underwent four hours of surgery and had three tendons re-attached. Immediately afterwards he flew to Perth for a re-check with a specialist there.

SPECIES: According to experienced fishermen and surfers the accident probably involved a small reef shark.

Shark Attack in Bali

Besides, sharks in general are probably one of the most misunderstood creatures on our planet. Since blockbuster movies like "Jaws" and "Deep blue sea" have appeared on screen, the fear of shark attacks seem to have skyrocketed. Yet, sharks are the most elegant and impressive marine creatures I can think of.

They are an example of a perfectly adapted predator which has been living in our oceans for over 400 million years hence, since way before the dinosaurs walked the earth. Their sensory systems are extremely evolved. For example, some species have a sense of smell which allows them to detect miniscule amounts of blood (1ppm of blood in water) and the ability to detect alternating electric fields (created by movements) with a potential gradient of 0.1 μ Volt/cm. It is therefore to be understood that whenever we are out there surfing and sharks are even within kilometres from us, they will actually know of us. Fortunately though, humans are not on their usual menu plan and most shark attacks are probably to be considered an unfortunate combination of curiosity combined with a sharp set of teeth.

Finally, as terrestrial beings it seems only natural for us to fear whatever is hiding under water and can not be controlled by our own doings. Nevertheless, and especially because we are surfers we should be grateful to the ocean and should understand how important it is to protect and to preserve the creatures living in it. "

The IndoSurfLife.com crew are still going to surf there. Balian is Bali's most consistent wave, and it would be even better with less people out. The rumors about a "Shark Attack" at Balian, West Bali are causing quite a stir here in Indonesia. As people hear the story they add a detail or two to make that bit more interesting.

IndoSurfLife.com preferred not to publish the story until we had all the correct information and different points of view to give you the complete picture.

Wei Ong, an Australian citizen, from Perth, Western Australia, was staying at Istana Balian (www.istanabalian.com), owned by our friend and partner Michael Trott who told us the details of the incident:

"Wei Ong hadn't been surfing very much of late due to work commitments. He checked into Istana Balian and kept on extending his stay as he was having such a great time here in Balian and Istana.

"When it happened he was paddling out, in very dirty murky waters from the rain, and felt a pull on his hand.

"He said he felt no pain and when pulled his hand out of the water he had deep, obvious bite marks around his thumb area. Pretty freaked out he tried to paddle in but his hand was quite mangled and pieces felt like they were falling off. It took him around 20 minutes, paddling with only his left hand, to get back to shore, leaving a blood trail all the way. Wei saw nothing in the water and as quick as it happened, what ever it was, it was gone.

"When he got to shore he was helped and taken to Prima Medika Hospital where he underwent 4 hours of surgery and had three tendons re-attached.

"I suggested he get on the next plane back to Perth once cleared and have a re-check with a

specialist there. Which is was what he did."

"I had some experienced fisherman/surfers staying at my villa and they said that there is no way it was a huge shark; it was most probably a small reef shark."

Fabio Cortesi, a PhD student, marine biologist and surfer shared his knowledge to help us understand what could have provoked this attack. "The attack is a real surprise to me because reported sightings of bigger sharks in the waters around Bali are very few and even then, are from way back in time. The sad fact is that not only Bali but all Indonesian waters have, especially in recent times, been heavily overfished. This coupled with a never ending demand for shark fins (apparently they make a good soup), has decimated the Indonesian shark populations heavily.

SOURCE: Indo Surf Life, Friday, December 3, 2010, <http://indosurflife.com/en/surfnews/388-shark-attack-in-bali.html>