

ACTIVITY: Free diving
CASE: GSAF 2013.04.14
DATE: Sunday April 14, 2013
LOCATION: False Bay, Western Cape Province, South Africa.

NAME: Unknown
DESCRIPTION: He was a male from Switzerland, and he was wearing a full wetsuit.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Waxing Crescent, 15% of the Moon was illuminated. First Quarter, April 18, 2013.

SEA CONDITIONS: Underwater visibility in the area can be around 30 metres.

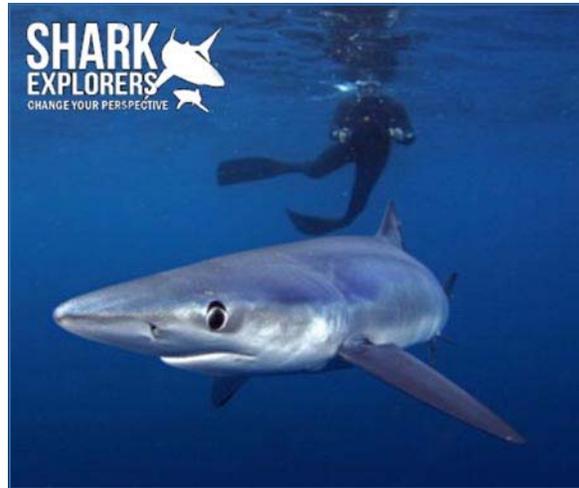
DISTANCE FROM SHORE: Free diving in False Bay generally takes place between 20 and 40 miles from the coast.

NARRATIVE: The man was diving with Shark Explorers. Shark Explorer's dive-masters accompany groups of about six divers at a time. Staff on the boat and in the water keep an eye out for white sharks that may be entering the area.

INJURY: The diver sustained a "light scratch". The shark nipped the man's wetsuit in the hand/wrist area and scratched his skin.

TREATMENT: The NSRI had responded to a call, but upon arrival paramedics noted that bleeding from the cut had stopped. The diver drove himself to hospital for treatment.

SPECIES: The incident involved a blue shark.



Tourist 'scratched' by shark
A Swiss tourist was bitten by a blue shark on Sunday during a free dive organised by one of False Bay's main shark dive operators.

Cape Town - A Swiss tourist was bitten by a blue shark on Sunday during a free dive organised by one of False Bay's main shark dive operators.

NSRI spokesman Craig Lambinon said the man sustained a "light scratch" and drove himself to hospital for treatment. The NSRI had responded to a call, but upon arrival paramedics noted that bleeding from the cut had stopped.

Yesterday Stephen Swanson, co-owner of Shark Explorers, which organised the dive, said the incident had been "blown out of proportion" because of miscommunication. "The incident was not remarkable. We merely alerted the NSRI as a matter of protocol. Because we deal with foreign tourists, we have to maintain professional conduct and take all possible precautions. The fact is that free diving is an adventure sport, and all adventure sports carry with them a small element of risk." Swanson declined to divulge the identity of the man without his consent, and said he was already on his way to his next dive - off the coast of Mozambique.

Swanson said while cage diving had the divers safely behind bars, free divers had no such protection. There was a certain amount of contact between blue sharks and divers during these dives. He described blue sharks as "curious" and "non-aggressive".

Divers who go out with the Shark Explorers wear wetsuits and are covered from head to toe. In Sunday's incident the shark bit through the tourist's wetsuit in the hand/wrist area and scratched his skin.

"The tourist has booked to dive with us later in the year before returning home. We just want to ensure that the blue shark's reputation is not damaged as a result of a misunderstanding," said Swanson.

Free diving in False Bay generally takes place between 20 and 40 miles from the coast. Water visibility can be around 30m, and Shark Explorer's dive-masters accompany groups of about six divers at a time. Staff on the boat and in the water keep an eye out for great white sharks that may be entering the area.

"When you are far offshore, a diver really is a needle in a haystack. The chances of coming into contact with a great white are minute. But one has to remain vigilant. Never say never," said Swanson.

Blue sharks are listed as Near Threatened on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species. They are among the most heavily fished sharks in the world, often as by-catch in tuna and swordfish fisheries.

SOURCE: Daneel Knoetze, daneel.knoetze@inl.co.za Cape Argus, April 16, 2013, <http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/tourist-scratched-by-shark-1.1501326>