



**ACTIVITY:** Fishing

**CASE:** GSAF 2013.04.21

**DATE:** Sunday April 21, 2013

**LOCATION:** Crowdy Head, New South Wales, Australia.

**NAME:** Alan Saunders

**DESCRIPTION:** He is a 51-year-old male.

#### **BACKGROUND**

**WEATHER:** At 14h00, William Town recorded mostly cloudy skies and visibility of 3.1 miles. The air temperature was 66.2°F, dew point 51.8°F, humidity 60%, sea level pressure 29.92 inches (falling), and wind direction was South at 8.1 mph.

**MOON PHASE:** First Quarter, April 18, 2013. Full Moon, April 26, 2013.

**ENVIRONMENT:** Crowdy Head is situated around the mouth of the Manning River. The incident took place during the seasonal mullet run.

**DEPTH OF WATER:** "Knee-deep"

**TIME:** 14h00

**NARRATIVE:** Three sharks had been caught in a fishing net. "Alan was involved in removing one of the sharks out of the wings of the net," said his brother, Ray. "He released that shark but another shark came in and bit him on both legs." In a television interview, Alan said that they had to get the sharks out of the net "or we get fined". (Grey nurse sharks are a protected species in Australia). He also said when the shark bit him, "it didn't feel like a bite; it felt like an electric charge."



*Alan Saunders hold shark tooth fragment recovered from his leg.*

**INJURY:** The patient sustained deep puncture wounds and lacerations to both legs, but no arteries or tendons were severed. A tooth fragment from the shark was recovered from a leg, “a calling card” said Alan.



**FIRST AID / TREATMENT:** Emergency services including surf life savers were quickly on the scene. The patient was flown by the Westpac Rescue Helicopter to John Hunter Hospital Newcastle for treatment. The Westpac Rescue Helicopter service reported that many sharks could be seen in the area from the air including one almost three metres in length.

**SPECIES:** The incident involved a grey nurse shark, said to be about three metres in length. The species is endangered throughout its range.

**SOURCE:** Fiona Keating, International Business Times, April 21, 2013, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/articles/459637/20130421/shark-attack-australia-new-south-wales-grey.htm>

Sky News, April 21, 2013, <http://news.sky.com/story/1080978/shark-attacks-man-in-knee-deep-water-on-beach>

Sarah Coates, 7News Sydney, April 22, 2013, <http://au.news.yahoo.com/nsw/latest/a/-/latest/16840944/shark-attack-survivors-souvenir/>



### **This is not a shark attack**

A fisherman standing knee deep in water has been bitten by a grey nurse shark.

The 51-year-old was pulling in nets of mullet at Crowdy Head on Sunday afternoon when the grey nurse shark appeared. "The grey nurse shark was operating around a school of mullet, I mean that's what grey nurse sharks do, they're fish eaters," Coffs Harbour fishing commentator Peter Russel told ABC Mid North Coast.

The annual mullet run is on and every autumn large schools of fish move north from inlet to inlet. Once the mullet moves out of the estuary fisherman haul their nets for the largest catch. "This fellow had a grey nurse in his net, and he was letting that go when the other one raced in and chomped him. Well that's the story I've heard," Peter Russel said. "Quite often sharks will get right out of the water when their chasing fish. They'll do all sorts of interesting stuff just to get a feed," Peter Russel said.

Peter Hitchins, co-owner of South West Rocks Dive Centre agreed that this incident was not an attack but rather a case of mistaken identity. "This is not a shark attack," he said. "Grey nurse sharks are not a threat; they are still the Labradors of the sea. He was in a school of shark food and accidentally got nipped. In shallow water with the sand stirred up, they can't see what's going on. All they know is that foods there and I doubt he even saw the guy's legs, he was just biting for food," Mr Hitchins said.

The fisherman was airlifted to John Hunter Hospital and is currently in a stable condition with puncture wounds and lacerations on both of his legs.

**SOURCE:** Fiona Poole, ABC Mid-Coast NSW, April 22, 2013,  
<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2013/04/22/3742185.htm?site=midnorthcoast>