

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: [GSAF 2013.10.11](#)

DATE: Friday October 11, 2013

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Indian Ocean at Lower Point next to Albatros Beach, Jeffrey's Bay, South Africa.

NAME: Burgert van der Westhuizen

DESCRIPTION: He was a 74-year-old male, an experienced open-water swimmer who regularly swam along the coastline of Jeffreys Bay.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: At 11h00, Port Elizabeth recorded clear skies. The air temperature was 69.8°F, dew point 57.2°F, humidity 64%, sea level pressure 29.89 inches (falling) and wind direction was WSW at 16.1 mph.

MOON PHASE: Waxing Crescent, 44% of the Moon was illuminated. First Quarter, October 12, 2013.

SEA CONDITIONS: The water was "warm and crystal clear" with very little swell.

ENVIRONMENT: According to local reports, witnesses said the swimmer was near to rocks when the huge shark attacked.

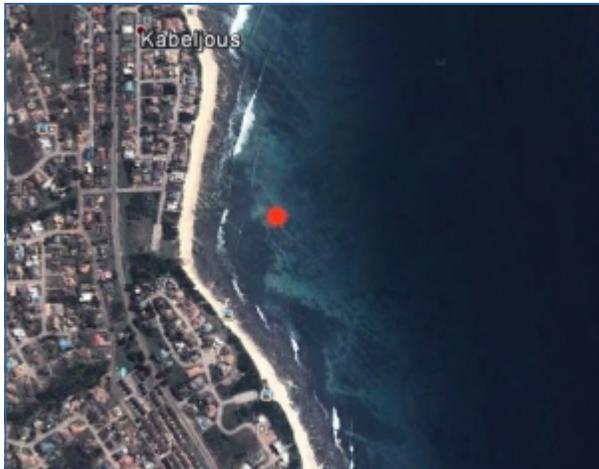
TIME: National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI) was alerted at 11h30.

NARRATIVE: Eye witnesses saw a commotion just beyond the take off spot at Point and eventually a shark was spotted attacking a body in the water.

One of the local surfers, Terry Olivier paddled out on a his four-metre kayak to see what was going on and found a shark taking bites from the swimmer's body. Olivier hit the shark with his paddle, and it moved off, then came back and grabbed the torso and submerged with it. According to Olivier, the shark was much longer than his paddle craft. The NSRI responded and circled the shark until it moved away and they were able to retrieve the body.

INJURY: Fatal. The NSRI confirmed they and police attended the scene shortly after 11.30am. A statement read: "On arrival on-scene remains of a body, believed to be those of an adult male, have been recovered from the water and handed into the care of the Police and the Forensic Pathology Services."

SPECIES: Initial reports were that two sharks were involved, but this was apparently due to the large size of the shark involved in the attack, which was estimated to be four metres long. It was later determined to be a single shark, which locals speculate may have been a white shark.



Burgert van der Westhuizen

RIP Burgert

The name of the swimmer who was attacked and killed by a shark in Jeffreys Bay has been released.

74 year old JBay local Burgert van der Westhuizen was an experienced open water swimmer, who regularly swam along the coastline of Jeffreys Bay.

He was often seen training in the canals of Marina Martinique, mainly in the summer months.

Burgert had the respect of the open water swim community as he was capable of swimming 3 km in under an hour, despite his age and also completed the JBay Swim Challenge in 2012.

This swim saw cold water sap the energy of the swimmers but Burgert was determined to finish and completed the 4 K distance in just under 2 hours.



Photo: JBay Swim

Burgert van der Westhuizen doing what he loved the most.



Ironically, the route of the JBay Swim Challenge went right past the site of yesterday's shark attack on Burgert. From eye witness accounts, Burgert was attacked by a shark around 5 meters in length, just beyond the take off zone at Lower Point.

Once word of the attack had spread, family and friends of the JBay open water swimmers frantically started to find out who was swimming in the ocean yesterday morning.

Burgert's vehicle was spotted near the BP Garage, where he normally parked when going for a swim. There was also just one person amongst the JBay swimmers who always wore a blue swim cap, which led to the devastating knowledge that it must have been Burgert who had been attacked.

He had been watching the conditions while mowing the lawn at home and decided that he had to go swim in the perfect conditions yesterday.

The sea water was warm, there was hardly any swell and no wind – ideal for a nice long swim past the Jeffreys Bay surf breaks. There was no indication that anything could have gone wrong when Burgert decided to go for a swim.

Although it is suspected that a Great White Shark was responsible for the attack, locals have found it strange that the shark continued to circle and bite the victim and did not swim off when it realised that it must have been a case of mistaken identity.



According to Terry Olivier, the surfer who bravely paddled out to try retrieve Burgert's body, the shark took bites and then grabbed the torso and went underwater with it.

To view an interview with Olivier, go to:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZ-gDEfYL1s&list=UU2GsGTaOLtIliOJbF3vmmVw>

When the NSRI arrived on the scene they managed to chase the shark off by buzzing it with the jet ski.

While the brutal nature of the shark attack has left the JBay surfers and swimmers reeling, friends and family can at least take some consolation that Burgert died doing what he loved the most.

SOURCE: JBayNews.com, <http://www.jbaynews.com/rip-burgert/>



Emergency workers at Jeffreys Bay

Fatal Shark attack in Jeffreys Bay

A beautiful summer's morning that saw the JBay Surf Lifesaving Club doing training swims at Main Beach and surfers snorkelling or paddling along the coast, turned out to be fatal to one of the JBay open water swimmers who was attacked by a shark at Point earlier today.

Eye witnesses saw a commotion just beyond the take off spot at Point and eventually a shark was spotted attacking a body in the water.



Photo: Hurley

A fatal shark attack took place at Point today

One of the local surfers, Terry Olivier paddled out on a craft to see what was going on and found a 3-4 m shark taking bites from the swimmer. Terry hit the shark with his paddle but it just kept on attacking the victim. The shark was much longer than his paddle craft.

The NSRI responded and the shark eventually moved away. The professional manner in which the NSRI went about their business is much appreciated by all of Jeffreys Bay.

The name of the swimmer has not yet been released.

The JBay ocean community is in shock over the incident as many of them swim along the coastline on a regular basis and Point is one of the most popular surf breaks in town.

Local swimmer Brenton Williams said that it is the first fatal shark attack to ever have occurred in Jeffreys Bay. "The attack happened just off Point and there are a crew of swimmers who regularly swim this section of coastline, said Williams. "We are all aware of the risks involved with ocean swimming and the danger of a shark attack is something we cannot control but we do minimise the risk by not swimming if there are birds and dolphins feeding or if sharks have been spotted in the area. The swimmer who was attacked today was a highly experienced ocean swimmer and swam along the coast more than anybody else in Jeffreys Bay", added Williams.

The Kouga Municipality took the precautionary measure of closing the beach.

Our deep condolences to the family and friends.

SOURCE: JBayNews.com, <http://www.jbaynews.com/fatal-shark-attack-in-jeffreys-bay/>

Kayaker tells of horror shark attack

Police and a rescue worker talk to an eyewitness on the Jeffreys Bay beach where a man was killed by a shark. A Jeffreys Bay kayaker has described how he used his oars to try to beat off the shark - which was bigger than his kayak - that killed a local swimmer on Friday. But it wouldn't let go and kept coming back for more.

The shock attack at Lower Point, at Albatross Beach, has rocked the town and the broader surfing community, which hails Jeffreys Bay as one of the five most famous surf spots in the world. The Kouga Municipality has closed all Jeffreys Bay beaches as a result of the attack.

Although the name of the dead man had not yet been released last night, it was ascertained that he was a local "elderly man" who swam there every day. One resident said the victim was wearing a blue bathing cap, and was snorkelling when he was attacked. The victim was well-known at the surfing paradise for loving the outdoors and the ocean. He was married.

Kayaker Terry Olivier, who tried to retrieve the body, said he was out on his sea kayak paddling from the Kabeljou side lower down the Point when he saw the man lying face-down in the water. He saw the shark, which was "longer than my kayak". He believed it was a great white. "I tried to retrieve the body but the shark wouldn't let go. I hit it with my oars, but it kept coming back for more bites," he said.

Allison Kuhl, of the Supertubes Surfing Foundation, said her son Zach had witnessed the attack while helping with a beach clean-up. He and his friend saw the man enter the water and her son said to his friend that he had a bad feeling that "the man should not go in". "The next thing, he saw a shark lifting the man up and down out the water, and there was blood everywhere." After being alerted to the attack, Kuhl raced to the beach where several people had gathered. Through the binoculars I could see that there was blood everywhere. I have seen fins in the water before, but this time you could see a lot of the shark's body. I could also see the man's blue swimming cap." She said Olivier had told her when he realised there was nothing more he could do at the attack scene, he paddled "back as fast as he could as he was also in great danger". Kuhl added that her son, who loved sharks, had been left traumatised. "What struck me is that shark attacks normally occur in murky water, but today was crystal clear."

Other witnesses said that when the NSRI raced to the scene, they had to circle the man's remains on Jet Skis to keep the birds at bay while they got a body bag. "We are all in shock," resident Paul van Jaarsveld said. "I was about to get in the water to shoot a fish for lunch."

NSRI spokesman Craig Lambinon confirmed that two sea rescue craft and the SAPS had responded to the incident. The remains were handed to the police and the Forensic Pathology Services, he said. "It appears, according to eye-witness reports, that the as-yet unidentified male victim had been snorkelling at the time of the incident," Lambinon added.

According to some witnesses, the shark was mistaken for two sharks because the distance between tail and back fin was so long.

The local Christian Surfers South Africa group decided to postpone their scheduled surf and skate events in Jeffreys Bay scheduled for today until November 9. - Saturday Argus

SOURCE: John Harvey, Steve Pike & Wendy L. Martin, IOL News, October 12, 2013, <http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/kayaker-tells-of-horror-shark-attack-1.1591056>

Dolphin saves surfer from shark attack in JBay

A mellow surf at the Point in Jeffreys Bay this morning nearly turned into a life threatening situation for local surfer Elke Schoeman when she narrowly missed being bitten by a shark when padding back to the beach.

“I was paddling towards the gulley at Lower Point and there was a dolphin swimming next to me. I was watching it swim and even stopped paddling for a bit as it is always something special when a dolphin is in close proximity”, said Elke.

“Suddenly there was a huge commotion right in front of me and literally right where the gulley is. The water was already shallow and all I saw was this big black shape and the next thing there was lots of blood in the water. I scrambled onto the rocks as quickly as I could and when I looked back it was all calm with just blood on the surface. I am convinced the dolphin saved me as I would have paddled right over the shark to get into the gulley”.

Several people saw the incident take place from the beach and it seems that a large shark was responsible for the attack on the dolphin.

“I saw lots of movement and a huge shape on top of the water and then lots of blood”, said Susan Botha, one of the people who witnessed the incident. “It was all over within 20 – 30 seconds and then there was just blood on the surface and some sea gulls came to see what was happening. I cannot say what kind of shark it was, except that it was big”.

There have been several shark incidents at Point over the years but none that have taken place recently. The first recorded shark attack in Jeffrey Bay took place when Koffie Jacobs was bumped by a shark at Supers on **7 July 1989**. His surfboard was hit from below by an estimated 3 m Great White and he got tossed up into the air.

“At first I thought a dolphin must have gone mad and swam into me as we didn’t really think there were sharks in those days. I was pretty shaken and paddled in after the incident. There was a bite mark on the surfboard that needed to be repaired. It was Paul Jeggels who first said it was a shark bite and that was the end of getting that board fixed” said Jacobs.

SOURCE: JBayNews.com, <http://www.jbaynews.com/dolphin-saves-surfer-from-shark-attack-in-jbay/>

NOTE: This article was published the day after the attack on Burgert van der Westhuizen. However, the date of the Jacob’s incident (June 5, 1989) was readily available in JBay’s own local newspaper morgue and at www.sharkattackfile.net. When neither the reporter nor the editor bothers to check an easily-verifiable fact, the accuracy of the entire article is put in doubt.