



Image by Pablo Castillo

ACTIVITY: Snorkeling / free diving

CASE: [GSAF 2015.11.20](#)

DATE: Friday November 20, 2015

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean at Punta Vicente Roca, Isabela Island, Galapagos Islands, Ecuador.

NAME: Graham Hurley

DESCRIPTION: A-55-year-old male from Wyoming, 5'9", 210 lbs and wearing black swim fins, clear mask, and a short black neoprene wetsuit.

SUPPORT BOAT: *Beagle*, a 105-foot steel hulled schooner.



BACKGROUND

WEATHER: At 10h00, SEST (the airport nearest the Galapagos Islands), recorded 6.2-mile visibility and mostly cloudy skies. The air temperature was 78.8°F, dew point 73.4°F, humidity 83%, sea level pressure 29.80 inches and wind direction was SSE at 11.5 mph. At the incident site, the air temperature was 71.6°F [22°C], estimated

MOON PHASE: Waxing Gibbous, 66% of the Moon was illuminated. Full Moon, November 25, 2015

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was calm with excellent underwater visibility.

ENVIRONMENT: A marine-only visitor site (no landings permitted), Punta Vicente Roca is located at the "mouth" of Isabela's west-facing seahorse shape. It is a marine-only visitor site (no landings permitted). The promontory lies on the southwestern flank of Volcán Ecuador, with two coves on either side of the remains of a tuff cone. At Punta Vicente Roca, the cold, nutrient-rich upwelling of Cromwell Current supports a wide variety of fish. The incident took place over a sand bottom. No one was fishing and there was no unusual fish or bird activity. There were no channels, drop-offs or kelp nearby, however sea lions, turtles and penguins were in the vicinity and two reef sharks were seen earlier in the day.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: Five metres

DEPTH Five metres, but the incident took place at the surface.

TIME: 10h15

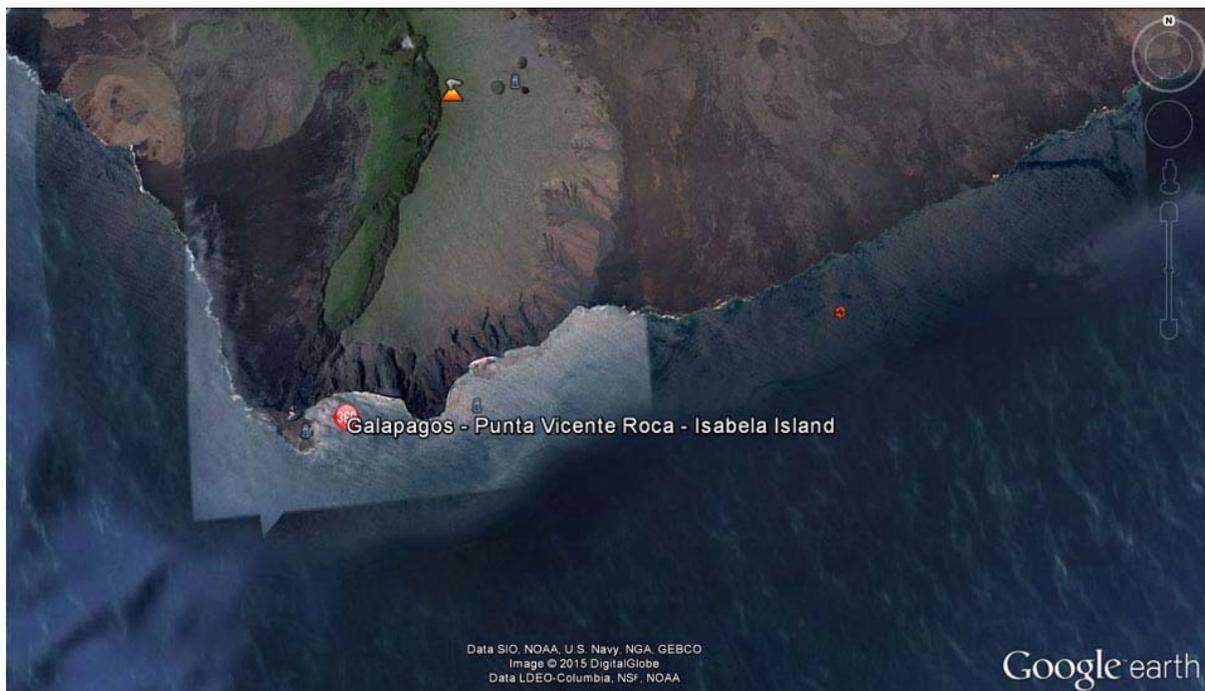
NARRATIVE: Graham Hurley had been in the water 45 minutes along with 11 others and was snorkeling on the surface. “The shark appeared swimming calmly on the bottom as it came around a rock wall corner and came in my direction” reported Hurley. “Then shark lunged toward me, grabbed my right flipper and pulled me vertical in the water.” The shark shook Hurley and attempted to submerge with him, but Hurley thrashed and the shark released his swim fin and dived to the bottom. “Then [the shark] returned and bit my left calf. During the struggle, I inadvertently kicked shark in face with my free foot and the shark disappeared. The entire attack was observed by group’s naturalist who was less than five metres away.”

INJURY: Two arcs of lacerations to left calf. No tissue lost.

FIRST AID / TREATMENT: The injury was treated on board the Beagle by Claire Smith, M.D., a fellow tourist on the boat.

SPECIES: Although the shark was initially identified as a three-metre bull shark by Rissell Morelli Cruz, naturalist, who was swimming behind Hurley and witnessed the incident. On examination of the photographs of the wound indicates that a Galapagos shark was most likely involved.

1. There is very little tissue damage.
2. A three-metre bull shark would have a much larger bite radius.
3. This would be unusual habitat for a bull shark. They are usually found closer to shallow coastal waters rather than offshore islands.
4. Galapagos sharks are very common in the area, and they have smaller mouths and smaller teeth for their size. Both the Galapagos shark and the bull shark have blunt noses which may have led to the witnesses’ impression that a bull shark was implicated in the incident.



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