

ACTIVITY: Snorkeling / spearfishing

CASE: GSAF 1984.09.11

DATE: September 11, 1984

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean in Caleta Melpomene Cove, Isla Guadalupe, Mexico.

NAME: Harry Ingram

DESCRIPTION: He was a 37-year-old male. He was wearing a full black neoprene wetsuit with hood and boots, weight belt, face mask with snorkel, dark green swim fins and orange life vest, and he carried a varnished wood speargun.

SUPPORT BOAT: *The Sand Dollar*.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was clear.

SEA CONDITIONS: The temperature was 21C (estimated) and underwater visibility was about 12 metres. Water visibility was decreasing with an increase in currents.

ENVIRONMENT: Caleta Melpomene Cove is the southernmost anchorage off Isla de Guadalupe. No pinnipeds were observed on shore or in the water. A bluefin tuna had been shot but escaped when the line parted.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 300 metres

DISTANCE FROM BOAT: 20 metres

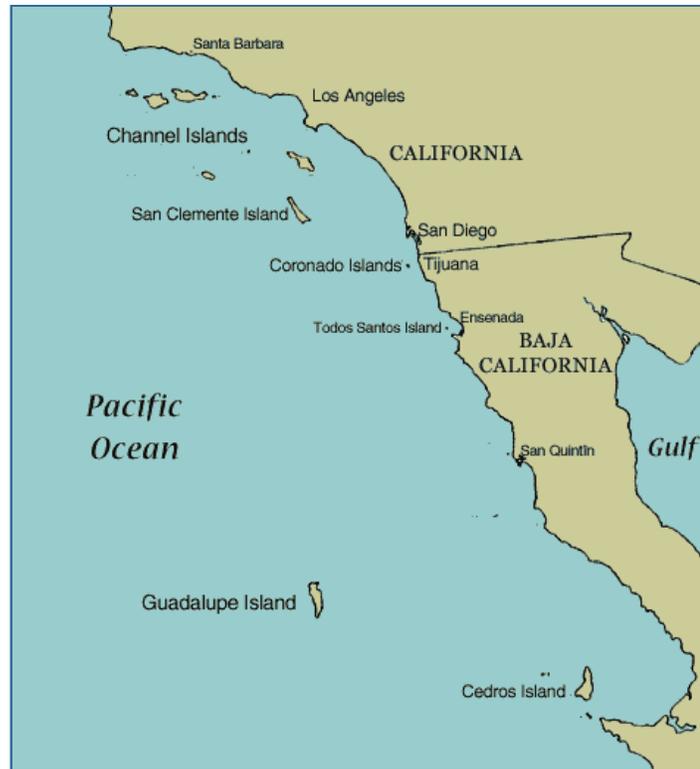
DEPTH OF WATER: 12 metres increasing to near 30 metres over an adjacent drop-off.

TIME: 17h50—18h00

NARRATIVE: Ingram was with a group of 25 divers. Other spearfishermen had shot a large bluefin tuna, *Thunnus thynnus*, which was consumed while still on the spear, presumably by a white shark. Two divers, Ingram and his companion, were about 12 metres apart above a drop-off, when Ingram observed a white shark below about three metres off the seafloor and slightly behind him. Then the shark turned rapidly toward him and charged. When the shark was about three metres away, Ingram fired his speargun, striking the shark in the head. The shark rolled slightly to its right and rammed him, thrusting him a metre above the surface and about 2 metres forward and, momentarily, onto the back of the shark. Then the shark swam away.

INJURY: Ingram sustained a bruise to the inner surface of his left bicep, possibly caused by his speargun when it contacted the head of the charging shark.

SPECIES: The incident involved a white shark about 4.5 to 5.5 metres in length.



11 September 1984. Harry Ingram (caucasian male age 37) was among a group of 25 divers aboard the boat SAND DOLLAR when it anchored at about 1700 hours some 300m offshore in Caleta Melpomene Cove. Water depth of about 12m increased to near 30m over an adjacent drop-off. The sky was clear, water temperature was estimated at 21°C, and underwater visibility was about 12 meters. Ingram wore a full black neoprene wetsuit with hood and boots, weight belt, face mask with snorkel, dark green swim fins, and orange life vest, and carried a varnished wood speargun.

Ingram and one of two companion divers returned aboard the boat after some 20 minutes of unsuccessful spearfishing. Water visibility was noted as decreasing along with an increase in currents. There were no reported sightings of pinnipeds either on shore or in the water. Within several minutes, the remaining diver speared a bluefin tuna, *Thunnus thynnus*, of sufficient size to tow the spearfisherman 15–18m across the surface before the line parted. Ingram and three other divers then entered the water: Ingram paired off with the original spearfisherman and drifted with him 120m from the boat and the other two divers. They encountered several slow-swimming tuna, and Ingram's companion speared one at a depth of about 9 meters. After running about 18m, the spearline suddenly went slack, at which time both divers noted a bubbly upwelling or boiling of water in the region of the expended line. The companion dove to retrieve his spear and during his ascent encountered what appeared to be a cloud of blood, 2–3m in diameter, where the upwelling had been observed moments earlier. At about 1750 hours, the two divers resumed hunting, separated by a distance of about 12 meters.

Snorkeling at the surface, Ingram observed a

large white shark below and slightly behind him, about 3 m off the bottom. After shouting a warning to his partner, Ingram slowly rotated 180° to keep the shark in view. The shark rolled on its left side and 'rotated' its eye in a way indicating to the diver that the shark was also observing him. A second shouted warning followed the first by a few seconds. The shark then turned and rose very rapidly towards Ingram at an angle of about 20°. At a closing distance of about 3 m, the diver discharged his speargun, striking the shark in the head, whereupon it rolled slightly to its right before ramming into him.

Ingram was suddenly thrust about 1 m out of the water and, in the same motion, about 2 m forward. He appeared to be on the back of the shark, which was estimated to have been greater in circumference than 'a large horse'. After reappearing from the turmoil of displaced water, free of the shark, Ingram was joined by his companion, and both divers were quickly brought aboard an inflatable about 60m from the boat. The orange bouy attached to Ingram's spearline was seen to travel on various headings before disappearing in an easterly direction while paralleling the shoreline.

The white shark was described by Ingram and his companions as about 4.5–5.5 m in length, with a dorsal fin about 0.6m high, a body about 1.2m wide, and large black eyes. Witnesses were impressed by the splashing sounds and water displaced by the shark, likening it to disturbances made by a killer whale reentering the water after a jump.

The only injury sustained by Ingram was a bruise to the inner surface of his left biceps, caused possibly by the recoil of his speargun when it contacted the head of the charging shark.

SOURCE: Collier, Ralph S. (1992) *Recurring attacks by white sharks on divers at two Pacific sites off Mexico and California*, Environmental Biology of Fishes 33: 320-321