

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: [GSAF 1994.07.09.b](#) / SA-411

DATE: Saturday July 9, 1994

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Indian Ocean at Nahoon Reef, five kilometres northeast of the harbour entrance at East London, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

32°59,4'S, 27°57,1'E

NAME: Bruce Corby

DESCRIPTION: The surfer was a 22-year-old male.

SURFBOARD: The surfboard is a white 7'3" [220 cm] trifin, with black fins, and it was attached to the surfer's ankle with a green leash.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a clear sunny day. At the time of the attack the air temperature was 23°C to 25°C and there was a light 10- to 15-knot breeze.

MOON PHASE: Waxing Crescent, 0% of the Moon was illuminated. New Moon, July 8, 1994.

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was green blue with three to four-metre visibility. The sea temperature was 17.5°C, and there were one to two-metre west-to-east swells. The surfers were over the seaward slope of Nahoon Reef when the shark attacked.

ENVIRONMENT: Nahoon lies on the west bank of the Nahoon River, five kilometres north of the entrance to East London Harbour. The most popular beach in East London, Nahoon is renowned throughout the South African surfing community for producing some spectacular waves and is the venue of many national surfing competitions.

"Plenty of whales were within a six-kilometre radius, apparently calving," reported Andrew Carter. Large numbers of Cape salmon had been caught close to shore during the week and seals had been seen at Nahoon the day before the attack.

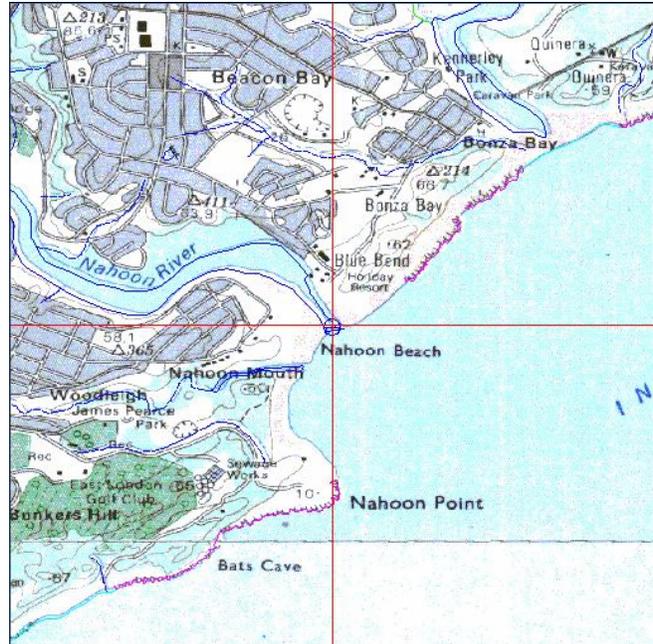
DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 150 metres off dry reef

DEPTH: Eight to 12 feet, over submerged reef, with drops to four metres

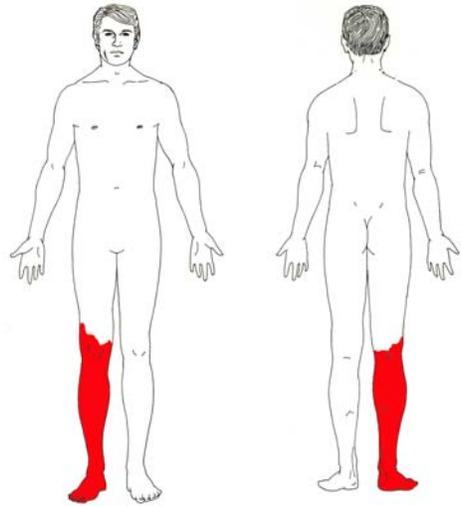
TIME: 13h26

NARRATIVE: Initially, the shark went after Andrew Carter, but caught a wave to shore. Then it focused its attention on Bruce Corby. Shaun Ridgard was paddling out to sea to catch another wave when he saw Corby 25 metres ahead and slightly to his right. "I saw a shark virtually leap out of the water, and it had Bruce's right leg in its jaws; Bruce was thrashing about, looking to his right," said Ridgard. "Another surfer reached Bruce, and they caught a white water wave in toward the rocks. I followed them in, saw Bruce being helped over the rocks, then went and helped Carter over the rocks to the car park."

John Born had been paddling out to break when two surfers shouted that they had seen a shark. Born looked around but didn't see anything. Then he heard a shout, saw the shark attacking Andrew Carter, and paddled towards him. "Andrew was off his board, and the



shark was on the other side of his board," said Born. "There was a lot of blood around them. The shark bit the board then, whilst Andrew was trying to ward it off. I shouted to him to catch a wave in to the rocks, and he did. Then I caught the shoulder of a wave and went in to the rocks, shouting to the other surfers that there had been a shark attack. When I reached the rocks I looked behind me and saw another surfer coming in on a wave, lying stomach-down on his board. I asked him if he had seen Carter attacked by a shark. He said, 'My leg is gone. I've just lost my leg.' I looked and saw that part of his right leg was missing; all I saw was a jagged mass of flesh. Then I realized that the surfer was Bruce Corby."



Born assisted Corby to the rocks and was joined there by Nicholas Pike, who had been in the car park when the surfers were attacked. "We got Bruce onto John Born's surfboard and got him to the car park," said Pike.

INJURY: Corby's right leg was amputated above the knee by the shark. Approximately 15 centimetres above the stump a series of widely-spaced tooth impressions were visible.

DAMAGE TO EQUIPMENT: Corby's surfboard was bitten at least twice by the shark. One of the bites was centered over a fin.

FIRST AID: "We got a tourniquet around his right leg and proceeded with first aid and resuscitation until the ambulance arrived," reported Pike. Alan Leicester, paramedic with Amatola Ambulance arrived on the scene at 13h32, managed to revive and stabilize Corby, then transported him to Frere Hospital, arriving at there at 14h20.

TREATMENT: On arrival at the hospital the patient was obtunded and in shock. Despite continuous medical care he never regained consciousness, suffered multiple system failure and died next day at 18h00.

SPECIES INVOLVED: According to eyewitnesses a 3.5 to 4-metre white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*, was involved.

COMMENT: This is the second incident in South Africa in which two individuals were bitten within moments of each other; on February 13, 1974 two lifesavers, Joe Kool and Damon Kendrick encountered a shark at Amanzimtoti. Kool escaped after sustaining a nip on his shin. Then the shark turned on Kendrick and removed most of his tissue of his calf. There was not sufficient evidence to conclude what species was involved in the attack.

The white shark that bit Heather Boswell in March 1993 in the Pacific Ocean exhibited similar behavior. After being repelled by Phil Buffington, it turned its attention on Boswell and severed her leg above the knee. In all these cases, after being repelled by the first person, the shark exhibited far more aggression when approaching the second person.

CASE INVESTIGATORS: Andrew Gifford & Marie Levine, Shark Research Institute