

**ACTIVITY:** Surfing

**CASE:** **GSAF 1998.06.05**

**DATE:** Friday June 5, 1998

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Indian Ocean at Jeffrey's Bay, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

**NAME:** Danny Bralver [or Bravier]

**DESCRIPTION:** He is a 49-year-old male from California.



## **BACKGROUND**

**WEATHER:** The sky was partly cloudy, and there was a fresh westerly to southwesterly breeze.

**MOON PHASE:** First Quarter, June 2, 1998

**ENVIRONMENT:** Local shark experts attribute the recent encounters between board riders and sharks to the large numbers of fish such as sardines, yellowtail and game fish moving closer to the shore possibly as a result of El Niño which has impacted on ocean currents.

**NARRATIVE:** "Fortunately it happened as I was paddling out and my feet and legs were on the board," said the surfer. The shark approached from beneath and catapulted the surfer out of the water. "Suddenly I was jolted into the air and then pandemonium broke out around me," he said. "The guys said they had seen a shark and started paddling like hell for the shore. Other guys said they saw another two sharks in the water."

The surfer said the incident was not as dramatic for him as he had not actually seen the shark. After reaching the safety of the shore, he discovered the tooth marks and the damage to his board. "It is actually a relief in the sense that one waits for such a thing to happen for such a long time, and now I feel as if I have now had my bad experience and can carry on surfing with a peaceful mind," he said.

Although he surfer stayed out of the water for the rest of the day, more than 20 other surfers were back in the water within an hour of the incident and continued to surf late into the evening.

**INJURY:** The surfer was not injured.

**INJURY TO SURFBOARD:** The shark left two deep tooth marks and a pressure dent in his surf board.

**SPECIES:** Not identified

**SOURCE:** Daily Dispatch (East London), June 6, 1998,  
<http://www.dispatch.co.za/1998/06/06/easterncape/JBAY.HTM>

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Andrew Gifford, Shark Research Institute-South Africa

# 'My brush with a Great White'

## US surfer meets his first shark

RIAAN SAUNDERS AND MIKE LOEWE

Jeffreys Bay – American surfer Danny Bralver couldn't believe his luck as he paddled out to meet the world-famous waves of Jeffreys Bay earlier this week.

He had travelled halfway around the world from Santa Barbara, in California, to be greeted by one of the world's great wonders: perfect ruler-edged waves peeling down the rocky shores of Supertubes at Jeffreys Bay.

But within minutes, he was thrashing his way back to shore in a panic after being "bumped" by another of the world's great natural wonders: a Great White shark.

The fish most feared by surfers in South Africa had merely left its calling card – two distinctive tooth marks on his surfboard.

Bralver was not injured. Being a true-blue, stoked surfer, he fixed his board and was back in the waves in record time.

The shark was one of three of the same species that caused pandemonium at the break earlier in the day.

It was Bralver's first surf in South Africa and his first brush with a shark.

He said: "After 35 years of surfing, it was bound to happen sometime."

"I could see there was something swimming around me, but I didn't know it was a shark."

*'After 35 years of surfing, it was bound to happen sometime'*

Someone yelled, "It's a shark", and about 20 surfers, including top Western Province surfer Davie Stolk, paddled for their lives.

They scrambled for the shore, caring little about cuts and grazes from the razor-sharp mussel-covered rocks.

An eyewitness said: "They were falling and tripping."

Four surfers, including former

world champion paddleskier Mike Fourie, ignored the threat and stayed in the water with Bralver.

One surfer had spotted two medium-sized sharks. Others saw a third shark.

Forty minutes after the scare, 10 surfers were back riding the waves.

Commercial fisherman Johan Founders attributed the increase in shark attacks – five in three weeks on the Eastern Cape coastline – to the Mozambican current that has pushed warm water into the bay.

"This attracts sardines which are followed by tuna and then sharks."

Jeffreys Bay town clerk Wessel Volk said that boards had been erected warning surfers of sharks.

However, these had been ignored and surfers had continued to frequent the hotspot, he said.

"We are not closing the beaches at this time, but we are looking into the situation."

It has been discovered that after the recent shark scares some surfer tourists are cutting short their visits to South Africa. – ECN Weekend Service.

## Humans are not haute cuisine of the deep

MIKE LOEWE

Grahamstown – Great White sharks are not really interested in eating human beings, Tom Hecht, the head of the Ichthyology and Fisheries Department at Rhodes University, said this week.

Four surfers have been attacked in three weeks along the Eastern Cape coast.

Prof Hecht said the big predators were merely giving the surfers a "tap" to see if they were tasty enough to scold.

He suggested humans did not taste

all that great to the sharks and were usually spat out.

He said that if the sharks were really intent on eating humans, there would be little left afterwards.

Prof Hecht said Great White sharks far preferred bull seals, which were bigger and more powerful in the water than humans.

He had cold comfort for surfers who believed they could scare off the sharks.

"Those little prods in the shark's eye, or hitting it on the nose, will make no damn difference. If it was really hungry they would not be

alive."

He also rejected the idea that the sea was unusually warm and was attracting more sharks than usual.

He said his department took temperatures twice daily at Port Alfred and studied information provided by the SA Data Centre for Oceanography in Cape Town.

The weather and water patterns this year were "absolutely normal".

He said the attacks were pure chance. "They were at the right place for the shark and the wrong time for them," he added. – ECN Weekend Service.