

**ACTIVITY:** Cruising

**CASE:** GSAF 1999.02.26.R

**DATE:** Reported February 26, 1999

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean on Frying Pan Shoals, North Carolina, USA.

**BOAT:** *Bird Dog*, a 38-foot sport fishing boat from Carolina Beach.

**OCCUPANTS:** Captain Buddy Severt and two crewmembers.

#### **BACKGROUND**

**SEA CONDITIONS:** Calm water

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 18 miles southeast of Cape Fear

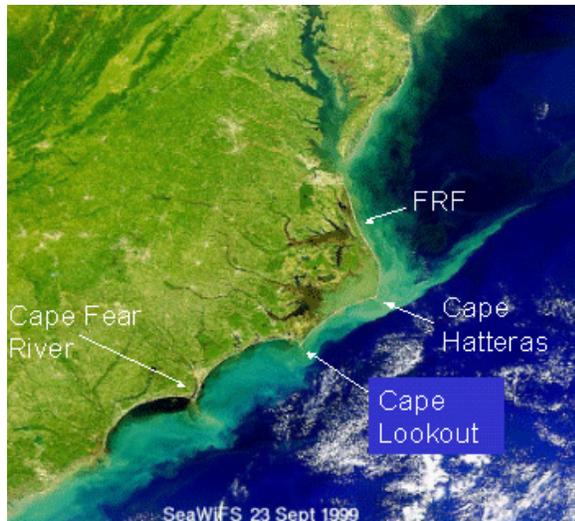


**NARRATIVE:** The *Bird Dog* was cruising when she inadvertently ran up on a basking shark apparently feeding on the surface. In the collision, the boat lost its running gear and a hole was ripped in her hull. The sea raced in through the opening in the hull, quickly filling the *Bird Dog* with water and causing her to sink. Fortunately, Severt and crew were able to make a fast escape into an inflatable raft. A distress call was made before abandoning ship, and a nearby fishing boat, the *Mike A Bee*, picked up Severt and his men. They were later transferred to another fishing boat, the *Class Action*, which was bound for Carolina Beach. Fortunately, all hands were safe despite their encounter. . . The damage to the shark is unknown.”

**SOURCES:** Lee Morgan “Basking Shark Sinks ‘*Bird Dog*’, Wilmington Morning Star, February 26, 1999 edition; John Hairr (2003), *Big Sharks of the Carolinas*, Averagesboro Press, Erwin, North Carolina.

**SPECIES:** Basking shark. Hairr writes, “It is a wonder more vessels did not suffer the same fate as the *Bird Dog*, as the seas around Frying Pan Shoals were filled with Basking Sharks. Dr. Schwartz later received reports of a school consisting of 100 of these enormous fish that was observed on February 11th, 1999, in the vicinity of Frying Pan and Cape Fear. The article on the next page may also refer to an encounter with basking shark in the same area.

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Clay Creswell, Global Shark Accident File



## A "Carolina" Sleigh Ride

In the nineteenth century, whalers out of Nantucket and other New England ports would often be dragged across the sea in their whale-boats for long distances by a whale that had been harpooned. The act of being towed by one of these whales is known in whaling folklore as a "Nantucket Sleigh Ride."

In North Carolina, there is at least one instance of people getting a free ride from a large marine animal that had been harpooned. But the obliging beast in this neck of the woods was a large shark.

The incident occurred on one of the sounds near Wilmington near the boat landing of Mrs. W.S. Willard back in 1938. Mrs. Willard's two sons and two of their friends, Joe Whitted and Christopher Quevedo, were rowing out on the sound when they spied a large shark. One of the boys flung his harpoon, which struck its mark.

The shark took off, towing the boat with the four boys across the water. The boys held onto the rope secured to the harpoon as the wounded shark made its way frantically down the sound.

The shark died before it could reach the open water of the ocean. The boys brought their catch ashore, and word spread of their fishing adventure. Soon, their prize shark was put on display at Gregg's Hardware Store in Wilmington. Unfortunately, we do not know what species of large shark this was that carried the boys on their memorable ride.