

**ACTIVITY:** Diving

**CASE:** [GSAF 1999.03.18.R](#)

**DATE:** Reported March 18, 1999. The incident took place during the previous week.

**LOCATION:** The incident took place off Codfish Island (Whenua Hou), west of Stewart Island, South Island, New Zealand.

**NAME:** Zane Smith

**DESCRIPTION:** He is a 24-year-old fisherman from Stewart Island.

#### **BACKGROUND**

**SEA CONDITIONS:** According to Smith, sharks are common around Stewart Island this year because of the warm water temperatures. He said he caught four seven-gill sharks and four mako sharks while he was “gropering”.

**ENVIRONMENT:** Southern Air pilot Nathan Helms said he had seen six 2.5-metre sharks swimming in Mason Bay, Stewart Island, about a month ago. A couple of weeks ago he saw a five-metre shark swimming just 25 metres from an English tourist.

**NARRATIVE:** Smith was diving for paua when he felt something latch on to his right shoulder. “I turned around and there was a seven-gill hanging off my wetsuit. I shot to the surface in a hurry. I’m lucky the shark didn’t close its mouth.” Curiosity soon got the better of the diver and he jumped back in the water to observe the shark. “I could see him disappearing into the blue, then he turned around and headed towards me. I swam underneath, grabbed the shark’s tail and yanked it,” said Smith. “It was a stupid thing to do. I wouldn’t have done it if I was in my right mind; the shark could have taken another bite at me.” However, the ignored the diver and swam away. Smith continued to dive for paua.

**INJURY:** No injury.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** A seven-gilled shark, 2.4 metres [eight feet] in length.

**SOURCE:** Southland Times, March 18, 1999 edition

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Richard D. Weeks, Global Shark Accident File

