

ACTIVITY: Diving for sea urchins

CASE: **GSAF 2000.12.05**

DATE: Tuesday December 5, 2000

LOCATION: The incident took place off Digby, Nova Scotia, in the Bay of Fundy, Canada.

NAME: Daniel MacDonald

DESCRIPTION: The diver, a 30-year-old male, was wearing a dry suit and gloves. He was diving from a fishing boat.



BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: First Quarter, December 3, 2000; Full Moon, December 11, 2000

SEA CONDITIONS: The water was dark and frigid. Tidal changes at Digby average from 25 feet [7.5 metres] to 26.4 feet [8 metres] and there are extensive mud flats.

ENVIRONMENT: Both Derrick Farstad, skipper of the fishing boat, and MacDonald suspected the shark was attracted to the area because fishermen had just dropped lobster pots full of fresh bait nearby. Chris Harvey-Clark, a marine biologist and veterinarian at Dalhousie University in Halifax and on the Board of Directors of Shark Research Institute-Canada, said divers and marine biologists have reported a number of strange occurrences in the waters off Nova Scotia in recent months. "The water temperature is getting warmer and sharks are staying north longer than usual. There have also been sightings of tropical creatures, such as an octopus and an electric ray normally seen around Cape Cod, Mass. We're seeing some pretty weird things up here."

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 60 metres

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: 16 metres

NARRATIVE: Daniel MacDonald was on the sea floor, looking for sea urchins when he felt a heavy thump on his side, turned and found himself face-to-face with the shark that had latched onto his fishing bag loaded with urchins. The shark began swimming seawards and the diver, his fingers locked in the bag, was bouncing off the side of the shark, "[The shark] was shaking the bag and after he shook it up a couple times, he darted off," said MacDonald. Then the shark circled back and hovered around the diver. MacDonald hit the shark repeatedly with his fishing bag during his 15-minute swim back to shore until the shark finally swam off.

INJURY: No injury, "except for some "stiff fingers," according to the diver.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The shark was about three metres in length. The incident is believed to have involved a porbeagle shark, *Lamna nasus*.

SOURCE: Telegraph-Journal, December 8, 2000

CASE INVESTIGATOR: R. Aiden Martin, Global Shark Accident File