

ACTIVITY: Spearfishing / free diving

CASE: GSAF 2003.11.27

DATE: Thursday November 27, 2003

LOCATION: The incident took place at Sodwana Bay, a popular dive area on the northeast coast of KwaZulu-Natal is 317 kilometres north of Durban, South Africa.

27°32,5'S, 32°40,08'E

NAME: Seldon Jee

DESCRIPTION: The diver was a 21-year-old male, from KwaMbonambi. He was employed as a dive instructor at a local dive company, Coral Reef Divers.



BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: First Quarter, November 30, 2003

ENVIRONMENT: Sodwana, one of South Africa's top diving destinations, is famed for its system of coral reefs. Bathed by the warm Mozambique Current, it has the most southerly coral reefs in the world. The reefs parallel the shore, and each reef is named for its distance from the launch site at Jesser Point.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: He was "hundreds of metres beyond the reefs" according to Debbie Oscroft who works at Coral Reef Divers.

TIME: Morning

NARRATIVE: Jee and two companions entered the water at 08h00. The two other divers were using scuba, but apparently Jee was free diving. He went spearfishing alone in deeper water farther offshore. When his companions surfaced after their dive, Jee was nowhere to be seen. The police were notified and arrived on site at 11h00.

INJURY: Presumed fatal. Jee's severed left hand and a fragment of wetsuit were recovered by divers the day he disappeared. Despite an intensive air/sea search by South African police and divers, the rest of his body was never found.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Free divers hold their breath and may lose consciousness. If the diver suffered "shallow water blackout" he could have drowned. His body may have drifted beyond the

search area and been scavenged by a shark. It is also possible that a shark may have been drawn to the diver by vibrations and blood from the speared fish. "The divers who searched for Jee the day he went missing came across a four-metre tiger shark, *Galeocerdo cuvier*, in the area. It was so big that a search plane also saw it from the air," reported Oscroft.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Erich Ritter, Ph.D., GSAF