

ACTIVITY: Spearfishing / filming
CASE: [GSAF 2004.09.25](#)
DATE: Saturday September 25, 2004
LOCATION: The incident took place off Batt Reef, near Port Douglas in north Queensland, Australia.

NAMES: Ben Cropp, John Harding and Trina Fleischman.
DESCRIPTION: Both Cropp and Harding are well-known underwater filmmakers.
BOAT: Inflatable dinghy

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, September 28, 2004
ENVIRONMENT: Mr Harding said they had not put any bait in the water and commented that the area was devoid of sea turtles, a favored prey item of tiger sharks.
DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 30 kilometres
DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: "Shallow".
TIME: Noon



NARRATIVE: The trio were spearfishing when they spotted five tiger sharks cruising in the area. "Ben's lived here for 20 years and that was the biggest number of sharks he's ever seen in a day," John Harding said. "I've never seen five of them in the one area before - they might have been looking for something but it's certainly not normal. ... Also strangely, the sharks were out cruising around noon when their normal feeding times are generally later in the day."

The trio followed the sharks to film them, moving behind a shark they estimated to be more than three metres in length. Harding was steering the dinghy, while Ben Cropp tried to film the shark, when suddenly the shark turned back, giving Harding no time to avoid hitting it. "All of a sudden this bloody great head came out of the water, and latched on to a pontoon," he said.

The shark bit into the inflatable boat, tearing a metre-long hole in the side and narrowly missing Ms Fleischman. "It just bit down on the port side, just in between Trina and I," said Harding. "It just came up out of the water and bit in." The shark held onto the boat for nearly five minutes as the pontoon deflated.

“The weight of the shark as it went back into the water dragged the boat down, plus the air deflating from the pontoon: pretty scary.” he said. The dinghy had two air chambers and the second kept them afloat.

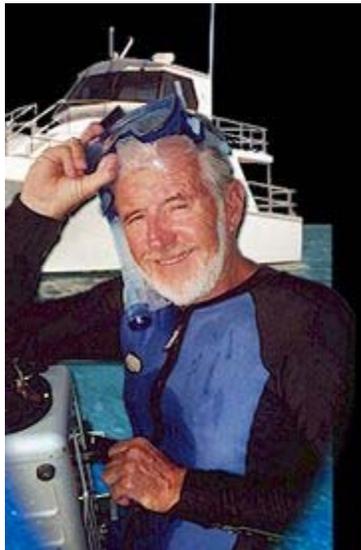
A boatload of fishermen looking for turtles heard their shouts and came to investigate, and drove the sharks away. They took Mr Harding, Mr Cropp and Ms Fleischman back to their catamaran, the *Freedom III*, where they assessed the damage to the dinghy.

INJURY: No injury to occupants

DAMAGE TO BOAT: A pontoon was shredded, but a second chamber in the inflatable dinghy was untouched, allowing the boat to remain afloat.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The incident involved a tiger shark, *Galeocerdo cuvier*, about three metres in length.

SOURCE: Kate Murray, Courier Mail & News.com.au - http://www.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,4057,10913912%5E3102,00.html



Ben Cropp

<http://www.bencropp.com.au/>