

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: **GSF 2006.04.11**

DATE: April 11, 2006

LOCATION: The incident took place in the South Pacific Ocean at Cowrie Hole off the Newcastle Ocean Baths, Newcastle Beach, New South Wales, Australia. 32°56'S, 151°46'E

NAME: Luke Cook

DESCRIPTION: He is a 15-year-old male from Caves Beach, near Swansea. A student at Belmont Christian College, he is also a gifted soccer player and due to travel to Italy in September as part of training squad visiting soccer giants AC Milan and Juventus.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: At 13h00, Newcastle weather station recorded clear skies. The air temperature was 82.4°F [28°C], dew point 48.2 F [9°C], humidity 30%, sea level pressure 29.92 inches [1013 hPa], and wind direction was NNW at 8.1 mph [13 km/h].

MOON PHASE: Waxing Gibbous, 94% of the moon's visible disk was illuminated.

ENVIRONMENT: Cook was surfing amid a school of baitfish when he was bitten.

The incident took place as the New South Wales Government met today in Sydney to discuss the use of shark nets on the state's beaches. Primary Industries Minister Ian Macdonald met with shark experts, fisheries officials and lifesavers from around the country to consider new measures that would prevent dolphins and other sea animals getting caught in nets. Mr Macdonald said the experts had generally been supportive of the Government's shark net program and the Government had no plans to abandon or change it. Shark nets have been in place in NSW since 1937, killing dolphins and sea turtles as well as sharks, and in that time only one person has been killed in a shark attacks in the entire state.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 40 metres

TIME: 13h30

NARRATIVE: Luke Cook had been surfing for four hours and was amid a school of fish at a break known as the Cowrie Hole between Newcastle and Nobbys beaches. "I was a bit tired and my feet were dangling over the edge of my board. The shark came up and grabbed my foot; I could feel it inside its mouth. I put my hand down there and punched it, and it let go. It was a bit of a shock. I didn't know what it was at first but once I got on to the sand I realized it must have been a shark, I was bleeding and it was quite painful," said Luke. No one



Cowrie Hole, Newcastle Beach



witnessed the incident, he said, and water police, lifesavers and helicopters failed to spot a shark. The beach was not closed to the public after the incident.

INJURY: The boy sustained several small lacerations on his left foot. The lacerations were about 2.5 cm in length and deep enough to require stitches. A tooth of the shark was found lodged below his big toe

FIRST AID / TREATMENT: Luke wrapped a sock around his foot to stop the bleeding, then walked up to lifeguard Sean Lennon and said, "Mate, can you help me, I think I have been bitten by a shark." The boy was treated by lifesavers and ambulance officers at Newcastle Beach. Then he was taken by ambulance to John Hunter Hospital, where a hospital spokeswoman confirmed the wounds had resulted from a shark bite. The teenager was reported to be in a satisfactory condition and would be released from hospital later the same day, the spokeswoman said. A surgeon, Dr Matthew Carroll, said the tooth fragment embedded in Luke's foot needed to be removed to avoid infection.



Image by Robert McKell

X-ray showing the shark tooth embedded in Luke Cook's toe.

SPECIES INVOLVED: It was thought the incident involved a juvenile bronze whaler shark.

SOURCES: The Daily Telegraph, April 11 & 12, 2006 editions,
<http://dailytelegraph.news.com.au/story/0,20281,18783540-5001028,00.html>.
<http://dailytelegraph.news.com.au/story/0,20281,18789805-5001022,00.html>
News.com.au, <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2006/04/11/1144521339092.html>;

