

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: GSAF 2006.12.18

DATE: Monday December 18, 2006

LOCATION: The incident took place at Winki Pop, on the south side of Bells Beach, Victoria, Australia.

38°20'S, 144°19'E

NAME: Peter Galvin

DESCRIPTION: He is a 25-year-old male from Torquay.

SURFBOARD: Galvin was using a white surfboard.



BACKGROUND

WEATHER: At 20h00, Geelong, 15 miles NNE East of Bells Beach, recorded visibility of 6.2 miles [10 km]. The air temperature was 60.8°F [11°C], dew point was 50°F [10°C], humidity 68%, sea level pressure 30.12 inches [1020 hPa], and wind direction was south at 18.4 mph [29.6 km/h].

SEA CONDITIONS: Surfing conditions were less than ideal with small waves and a strong breeze.

MOON PHASE: Waning Crescent, 7% of the Moon's visible disk was illuminated. New Moon, December 21, 2006.

ENVIRONMENT: Winki Pop boasts some of the best rights to be found in Australia, with long, tall walls that can peel up to 300 metres on the shallow rock reef bottom. Winki has a challenging takeoff point followed by endless walling sections that get faster as the wave reels along the reef. Fishermen in the area had reported sharks in recent days and attributed this to warmer ocean temperatures affecting the region. Seals had been observed playing and swimming in the area in days prior to this incident.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 100 metres

TIME: Just before 20h00 (Sunset at 20h39)



Peter Galvin

NARRATIVE: Peter Galvin was about 50 metres from his friend, Andrew Majernik. He was sitting on his board with his legs dangling in the water and waiting for a wave when the shark approached from behind and below and grabbed his left calf. The surfer fought off the shark and was not pulled from his board. Galvin reached shore with assistance from Majernik, then bystanders helped him onto the beach.

INJURY: There was large and deep laceration behind the surfer's knee which extended to the bone, "basically the whole of the back of his knee, and a laceration to his calf, which was probably 15 centimetres long," according to paramedic, David Brooks. There were also multiple puncture wounds to the top of the surfer's left calf.

DAMAGE TO SURFBOARD: The surfboard was damaged by the shark.

FIRST AID / TREATMENT: Majerni and two British backpackers kept pressure on the wound until Rural Ambulance Victoria paramedics arrived. Galvin was treated at the scene by paramedics then flown by air ambulance (helicopter) to Royal Melbourne Hospital where he was admitted in serious but stable condition. The surfer never lost consciousness from the time he was bitten until admission to the hospital. He underwent four rounds of surgery, including a skin graft, to repair his leg and was in the hospital for 11 days. Two weeks after he was discharged, complications caused him to be re-admitted and he was hospitalized for another month. Then an allergic reaction to antibiotics sent him back to the hospital for another five days.

SPECIES: Witnesses reported seeing a shark between 2.5 and three metres long after the surfer's leg and surfboard were bitten, and a shark's tooth was recovered from the surfer's wetsuit. Andrew Fox from the Rodney Fox Shark Museum said, "In the cooler waters off Victoria there are only a couple of sharks regularly involved in shark attacks and they're great whites and bronze whalers. It is speculative at this stage, but they're the main suspects." Terry Walker, from the Marine and Freshwater Systems Laboratory in Queenscliff, said the Torquay man was probably bitten by a smaller shark, most likely a broadnose sevengill shark, not a white shark.

In 2007, Galvin said, "I sometimes get freaked out when I'm in the water when I see something dark in the water or a cloud goes over the water giving off a reflection, and said he had no resentment towards the shark. "The ocean doesn't owe me anything and if you don't accept the risks that come with the ocean you don't get in the first place."



Peter Galvin's surfboard



SOURCES: ABC, December 19, 2006, <http://au.news.yahoo.com/061218/21/11tf9.html>

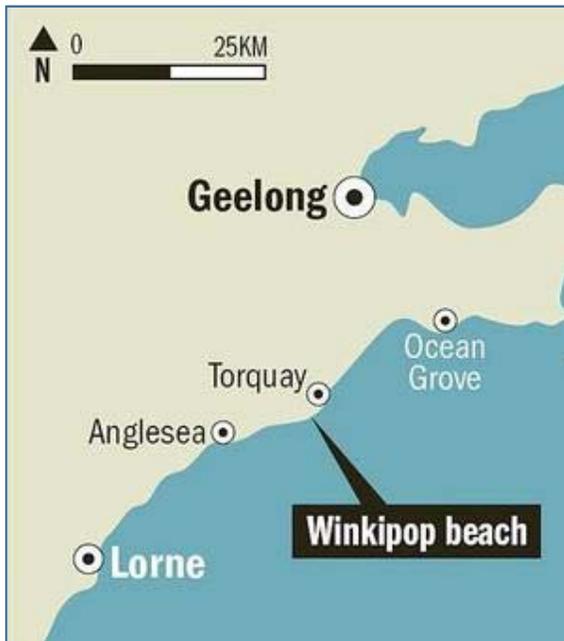
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<http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,23739,20949523-5003402,00.html>

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Phil Kemp, GSAF



An ambulance helicopter prepares to transport surfer Peter Galvin to hospital after he was injured by a shark near Bells Beach.

Photo : Murray Thomas



Tourists look out from the safety of the viewing platform at a quiet Wikipop beach.

Photo : Drew Ryan

A coastwatch plane passes over the site of the shark accident.

