

ACTIVITY: Fishing for red snapper

CASE: [GSAF 2008.00.00.b](#)

DATE: Fall, 2008

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean off Fort Pierce, St Lucie County, Florida, USA.

NAME: Johnny Silva

DESCRIPTION: He is a commercial angler.

NARRATIVE: “While fishing for red snapper on a bright, calm day last fall, Johnny Silva, a commercial angler of Fort Pierce, Fla, hooked into a pesky 10-foot nurse shark. As Silva was leaning over the side of his boat trying to haul the lummo out of the water, his left hand slipped and the shark seized it. Although a good bit is known today about sharks, no one can surely say what any one of them will do in a given situation. Rather than biting down hard on Johnny Silva's hand as a nurse shark would customarily do on such a soft morsel, this shark merely held Silva's hand firmly in its mouth, sucking on it lovingly as a child is wont to do with a lollipop. Whenever Silva tried to withdraw his hand, the shark would roll an eye at him and increase the pressure of its jaws. ‘Each time it clamped down hard,’ Silva relates, ‘it felt like a 300-pound man was standing on my hand wearing golf shoes. After 20 minutes trying to get it back, I began wondering what sort of work I could take up as a one-armed man.’

“Luckily two rival fishermen out of Vero Beach happened by and shouted across the water to ask Silva if he were in trouble. ‘If a shark swallowing your hand is a problem,’ Silva shouted back, ‘then I've got a problem.’ Like most commercial fishermen of the area, the Vero Beach anglers had a gun aboard — a .38 magnum revolver — explicitly for killing sharks. The simplest way to kill a shark is to put as many shots as necessary into its small brain, but the Vero Beach men realized that, in this case, any magnum slug fired into the shark's brain would also pass through Silva's hand. As a desperate alternative, Silva suggested that his rescuers fire into the shark's rearmost gill slit, on the theory that such a cruel surprise just might make the beast open its mouth. The Vero Beach men did as Silva suggested. The shark opened its mouth. Silva quickly pulled out his hand, which was lightly damaged but had all fingers still functioning.

“While Johnny Silva probably is the only man who has had any shark hold his hand in such an intimate manner for 20 minutes, on the east coast of Florida in the past few years a number of people, both residents and paying guests, have had more contact with sharks than they care for. . . Waving both his good hands, Johnny Silva, the near-victim of the nurse shark, complains, ‘You find a good snapper hole, and when you get the first fish on you feel the line go down, down, down. A shark has the fish, and you might as well move on, because you won't get another snapper there.’”

INJURY: Minor

SOURCE: [sharkmn42](#), posted Friday January 30, 2009 on Extremecoast.com, <http://extremecoast.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=12887>

NOTE: This was a provoked incident; the shark was hooked.

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