

ACTIVITY: Fishing

CASE: GSAF 2009.01.18

DATE: Sunday January 18, 2009

LOCATION: Rutledge's Cutting Tower Hill, Victoria, Australia.

BOAT: A 4.2-metre aluminum boat

OCCUPANTS: Scott Fulton and his father John

BACKGROUND

ENVIRONMENT: Tower Hill is a dormant volcano on the southwest coast of Victoria.

"Large numbers of snappers had been around the boat."

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: Two kilometres

TIME: 09h20

NARRATIVE: "They (snapper) were going off and then they just went quiet," Scott said. "I was washing my hands in the water and here he was, with his eyes looking at us." The shark, which was "a good metre-and-a-half" longer than their boat, circled the anchored vessel about four times.

"He came back around and bit the motor for a while. It was shaking the (outboard) motor around," said Scott "We were a bit nervous when it was shaking the whole boat around. It (the motor) has got little teeth marks and scratches on it."

The shark eventually let go of the motor and circled the boat again, Scott said. "It started to come back and we cut the anchor rope and took off."

INJURY: No injury

DAMAGE TO EQUIPMENT: The blades of the prop were scratched.

SPECIES: The incident involved a 5.5-metre shark. Lake Purrumbete shark fisherman of 30 years, Peter Edge identified the shark as a white pointer when he saw the photograph Scott had taken with his mobile phone.



Scott Fulton examines the outboard motor of his boat.

Photo courtesy Glen Watson

MOTOR MOUTH: Great white shark attacks men's fishing boat

TWO Mailors Flat anglers admitted they were "a bit nervous" when a 5.5-metre great white shark attacked their boat and violently shook it during a fishing trip off Tower Hill.

Scott Fulton and his father John were lucky they were the ones that got away after the white pointer gatecrashed what had been a successful snapper fishing trip on Sunday morning.

The close encounter came after several large great white sharks have been seen along Australia's east coast, with serious attacks on surfers reported in Tasmania and northern NSW.

The pair were about two kilometres off Rutledge's Cutting about 9.20am when large numbers of snapper around their 4.2-metre aluminium boat suddenly vanished.

"They (snapper) were going off and then they just went quiet," Scott said.

"I was washing my hands in the water and here he was, with his eyes looking at us." The shark, which was "a good metre-and-a-half" longer than their boat, circled the anchored vessel about four times.

"He came back around and bit the motor for a while. It was shaking the (outboard) motor around. "We were a bit nervous when it was shaking the whole boat around. It (the motor) has got little teeth marks and scratches on it."

The enormous predator eventually let go of the motor and circled the boat again, Scott said. "It started to come back and we cut the anchor rope and took off."

Lake Purrumbete shark fisherman of 30 years, Peter Edge instantly identified the shark as a white pointer when he saw the photograph Scott had taken with his mobile phone.

"They will chew outboards, no worries about that," Mr Edge said.

"Even on the bigger boats over in South Australia, they chew on the prop."

Mr Edge said the shark would have been following the snapper as they gathered around the boat and would not have been seeking to attack the two men. "If it got really agitated, really stirred up, it could have tipped over the boat but that would be a pretty rare case."

Mr Edge, who hopes to swim in a shark cage to celebrate his upcoming 50th birthday, played down concerns over increasing numbers of larger sharks coming in closer to shore this summer.

In another rare marine sighting for the south-west, about 40 minutes after the Fultons' close shave Allansford angler John Clements was in his five-metre boat about three kilometres off Lake Gilliear with a friend when a pod of four killer whales cruised past. "We were at anchor fishing and they came up next to us," Mr Clements said. "They were beautiful. One had a calf swimming next to it. They were heading down Peterborough way and one was even coming out of the water."

SOURCE: Alex Johnson, The Standard (Australia); January 20, 2009;
<http://www.standard.net.au/news/local/news/general/motor-mouth-great-white-shark-attacks-mens-fishing-boat/1410925.aspx>