

**ACTIVITY:** Swimming after kayak capsized  
**CASE:** [GSAF 2009.12.16](#)  
**DATE:** Wednesday December 16, 2009  
**LOCATION:** Clark Island, North Island, New Zealand

**NAME:** Maurice Bede Philips  
**DESCRIPTION:** He was a 24-year-old male from Ngaruawahia, Waikato.

**BACKGROUND**

**ENVIRONMENT:** *Hauturu* or Clark Island lies off the town of Whangamata on the southeast coast of the Coromandel Peninsula. The island is accessible by wading at low tide and is popular in summer months for kayakers.



**NARRATIVE:** Mr. Philips and a friend were on a fishing trip when his kayak capsized. They were swimming to shore when he disappeared. The coroner said a pathologist had identified drowning as the cause of death.

**INJURY:** When Mr. Philips' body was recovered there was a large bite on the upper thigh. But the large amount of tissue loss from shark bites and the resulting blood loss made it uncertain if Mr. Philips died before or after the attack. The evidence was "evenly balanced".

Images of the bite marks on Mr. Philips' legs were sent to Department of Conservation shark expert Clinton Duffy, who said a 2.8m-3m great white would have been responsible. He believed the position of the bite on Mr Philips' upper thigh was consistent with an attack from below, suggesting he could have been swimming on the surface when attacked.

**SPECIES:** The incident was thought to involve a white shark, 2.8 to 3 metres in length.

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Richard D. Weeks