

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: [GSAF 2009.12.22](#)

DATE: Tuesday December 22, 2009

LOCATION: The accident took place in the Indian Ocean at Ponta do Oro Bay in southern Mozambique.

NAME: Peter James Fraser

DESCRIPTION: He is a 27-year-old male from Rustenberg, South Africa.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Waxing Crescent, 29% of the Moon was illuminated. First Quarter, December 24, 2009.

DEPTH OF WATER: Shoulder-deep

TIME: 16h30

NARRATIVE: Peter Fraser was on holiday when he was bitten by the shark. The attack lasted only seconds. "I first felt the thing bump my legs, but I couldn't see anything in the dark water," said Fraser. "During the attack I felt nothing. It wasn't sore. Only later, when I hit its head away, I realised it was a shark. One always hears what you should do during an attack, but in the heat of the moment, I couldn't really think of anything. I just wanted to get away. Only when I got out of the water and saw the blood did I realise how serious it was," he said.

INJURY: The shark bit him on the right knee, beneath the right shoulder, arm and forearm, chest and on his back on the right side where he sustained a 20 cm laceration. As he fended off the shark, he sustained defense wounds on his hands, resulting in deep cuts across the knuckles of his left hand and almost severing three tendons on the top of his fingers. His right hand sustained less severe lacerations.

TREATMENT: He was treated by a female paramedic who was on holiday at Ponta do Ouro. Kobus Latsky, his girlfriend's father, loaded Fraser in his bakkie and raced him to a first-aid post. From there, Fraser was airlifted by helicopter to Manguzi at Kosi Bay in northern KwaZulu-Natal. Unable to be treated there, he was flown to Empangeni Hospital where he underwent four-and-a-half hours of surgery. The next day, Fraser was transferred to a hospital in Richards Bay. It was anticipated that at least one more surgical procedure will be needed to reattach the partially severed tendons in his left hand.

SPECIES: It was initially speculated the accident involved a tiger shark, while others believe it involved a Zambesi shark, about two metres in length.



Herman Verwey, Beeld

Peter Fraser

Man recounts Moz shark attack

Johannesburg - The South African man who survived a shark attack in southern Mozambique last week says it will be a long time before he dares to go back into the sea.

Peter Fraser, 27, of Rustenburg, was speaking on his arrival at OR Tambo International Airport on Monday after he was discharged from a hospital in Richards Bay.

He said he survived the attack by a Zambezi shark, in calm water at Ponta d'Ouro, by hitting the creature with a flipper.

"I don't think I am unlucky that I was attacked so much as lucky to have survived," he said.

Wounds

He did not (as reported by Sapa on Sunday) lose any limbs in the attack, but doctors had to close a wound more than 20cm long on his back. The shark also bit a chunk of flesh from his right shoulder, and bit his right upper and forearm, his chest and his right hand.

"During the attack I felt nothing. It wasn't sore. Only when I got out of the water and saw the blood did I realise how serious it was," he said.

The attack lasted only seconds. "I first felt the thing bump my legs, but I couldn't see anything in the dark water. Only later, when I hit its head away, I realised it was a shark."

He estimated the shark was about two metres long.

"One always hears what you should do during an attack, but in the heat of the moment, I couldn't really think of anything. I just wanted to get away."

'We were in their world'

Fraser said he doesn't think the attack could have been prevented. "We weren't in deep; the water was about shoulder height. It was just a case of, we were in their [the sharks'] world, not them in ours."

Fraser's girlfriend, Nicolene Latsky, 27, who witnessed the attack, said he had lost a lot of blood by the time he got out of the water.

Her father, Kobus Latsky, loaded Fraser on his bakkie and raced him to a first-aid post. From there, Fraser was airlifted by helicopter to Manguzi at Kosi Bay in northern KwaZulu-Natal.

"They couldn't treat him there, so he was flown to Empangeni hospital, where they operated for four-and-a-half hours to close the wounds," she said.

The next day, Fraser was transferred to a hospital in Richards Bay to recover.

SOURCE: Daniëlla du Plooy, Beeld, December 29, 2009,
http://www.news24.com/Content/SouthAfrica/News/1059/5ff156eb9deb44d49af61f7e5aafad4a/29-12-2009-09-51/Man_recounts_Moz_shark_attack

Ponta d'Ouro Shark Attack

A shark has attacked a 27 year old diver from Rustenburg yesterday afternoon at the world-class surfing point of Ponta d'Ouro in Mozambique. Speaking to Zigzag earlier today, Sasha Clark, a keen surfer, diver and resident of Ponta told us that the attack was not too severe.

"We think it was a small Black Tip or Raggie, If it had been a Great White, Zambezi or Tiger it would have been a far different story."

"The attack happened right after the guy was offloaded onto a shallow sand bank near the shore. When he began wading in the shark moved in for the first bite. The shark hit him on the shoulder and when he tried to fend it off it snapped onto his hand. He managed to ward the shark off and return to shore, but not before a final bite to his leg."

The victim was lifted by private helicopter to hospital in Richards Bay shortly after the incident.

The last serious shark attack at the point took place in 1998 when KZN provincial surfer Roberto Zornada was bitten on the foot by a Zambezi ([GSAF 1998.01.14](#)).

"Contrary to earlier reports, the victim did not lose an arm or leg," says Jeremy Cliff, head researcher of the KZN Sharks Board. "At this stage it is difficult to determine what shark was responsible, but we suspect a Zambezi as they are often seen by divers on the deeper reefs off Ponta d'Ouro."

Life has already returning to normal at the popular Mozambique tourist spot with surfers, bathers and divers back in the water this morning.

SOURCE: ZigZag magazine, December 23, 2009,
<http://www.zigzag.co.za/news/enviro/824/Ponta-d%27Ouro-Shark-Attack>



According to witnesses the beach was in chaos after yesterday's shark attack at Ponta

Image courtesy Frew)

Shark attack – the family speaks

The family of Peter James Fraser sets the record straight.

The family and girlfriend of shark attack victim Peter James Fraser have set the record straight regarding the facts about the shark attack which occurred in Ponta do Oura last week on Tuesday 22 December. Contrary to reports circulating in local and Mozambiquan print and broadcast media, Fraser did not lose any limbs, although he did sustain 6 injuries of varying severity from his encounter with the 2-metre shark, which has been tentatively identified as a juvenile Tiger shark.

Fraser, 27, and his girlfriend Nicolene Latsky, both from Rustenburg, were holidaying in the Mozambiquan tourist hotspot of Ponta Do Oura. At approximately 16h30 on the day of the attack, Fraser was swimming in the bay and caught a wave to shore. As he was exiting the shallow murky water, he felt something bump his leg. Thinking it was his girlfriend playing the fool, he thought nothing of it. However, the inquisitive shark came back at him, biting him on the right knee and causing him to fall to his knees in the half a metre of water.

The shark came at him again from his right hand side, biting him beneath the right shoulder and again on his back on the right hand side. The worst of his injuries were sustained when he fended the shark off with both his hands. The shark bit down on his hands, resulting in deep cuts across all of his knuckles on his left hand, almost severing through three tendons on the top of his fingers. His right hand sustained less severe lacerations. Peter then exited the water unassisted, where he was treated by a female paramedic who was on holiday at the same location.

Latsky said that “I have never had a fright like that in my life!” According to Latsky, “the attack really took us by surprise because Peter was in such shallow water, the shark’s back and dorsal fin were completely out of the water”. She also said that “there were many other bathers around, there was even a man with a lilo right next to Pete, with another 100-150 people swimming in the bay. In the minutes before the attack, we saw small fish jumping out the water quite near to us but did not consider that it was because a shark was near”. Soon after the attack, it was heard that a group of divers had begun to warn other bathers that they had witnessed a shark chasing a small school of fish into the shallows of the bay.

Latsky said that “we were lucky to find someone in Ponta Do Oura who owned a helicopter, and he flew us directly to the border. Pete was then transported by ambulance to the local Manguzi hospital in Kosi Bay where he was stabilised. From there he travelled by ambulance to Ngwelezana Hospital in Empangeni. Finally, from there he travelled once again by ambulance to The Bay Hospital in Richards Bay where he was on a drip with antibiotics for 4 days to prevent infection. We are so grateful to the pilot for taking Pete across the border as it was a very serious situation with Pete losing a lot of blood. Once at the Empangeni hospital we had quite a lengthy wait before Pete could get into theatre, but once he was in there the doctors did a fantastic job during the four and a half hour surgery”. Peter was release from hospital yesterday (28 December), and flew back to Gauteng from Richards Bay.

Fraser, who is said to be in good spirits despite being in quite some pain, will require at least one more operation to reattach the partially severed tendons in his left hand. The mounting medical bills will be a concern for Peter, who has recently started a small supply business, and whose medical aid expired only three months ago. He has already incurred costs in the region of R30 000 that he is aware of, and still has no idea of what the helicopter costs will be. It is estimated that he will probably incur another R20 000 in aftercare and rehabilitation costs, and if additional surgery is required to the tendons and or any skin grafts this could be substantially higher.

Despite the attack, Latsky says Fraser “does not blame the shark in any way. When we swim in the ocean, we are in their territory.” Fraser is an outdoor enthusiast who loves quad biking, plays hockey socially, enjoys fishing and goes to Mozambique about 2 or 3 times a year.

Marine conservationist and shark expert Mark Addison said that “it is very unusual for a shark to go into a shallow bay with the added deterrent of high mechanised watersport usage without some kind of olfactory draw or other predatory related stimulus - in this case, possibly the fish it was reported to have been chasing assisted by the high tide which would have allowed the shark to swim over the extensive sand bank network in the bay. It is also a common misperception that sharks only respond to olfactory stimulus and this only because they are looking for a meal. The reality is that they don't, and in many cases are curious and this alone could draw them to an area or to an object, which they would then subject to further scrutiny - they do this by biting as they have no hands to determine the objects substance or in some cases suitability for a meal. The net result is that the shark does not feed 24/7/365. Bear in mind that a shark eats approximately 10% of its body weight per week, add to this the fact that any energy acquisition (i.e. food) they don't use immediately gets stored in the liver for another day and this makes sharks the camels of the sea - a very necessary adaptation if you are going to have to cover vast tracts of ocean for your next meal.

Back to the case in point - at Ponta, for example, my experience over the last twenty years of operating in the area is that in the case of the resident dolphin pod and transitory whale sharks, they tend to give the bay a wider berth during these periods of heightened boating and watersport activity. At Quarter mile reef in Sodwana, on the other hand, the arrival of the pregnant ragged tooth sharks coincides with the same heightened holiday boating traffic and in this case the sharks have very little choice but to put up with boats whizzing over their heads, as the reef is so vital to their gestation period in these warmer shallower waters where they are by and large able to avoid the pelagic predators. Basically, there is no one size fits all in terms of our searching for answers as to why this bite event happened in the first place. Since a bite such as this, which happened in shallow water, near the shore and around noisy boating activity, is really out of character we need to look at the potential reasons for this” said Addison.

Addison said that factors, other than natural ones such as chasing fish (a favoured food source of juvenile tigers) which may have contributed to the shark being in the bay, include “the fact that as a result of all of rock and surf fishing being done, there is between 100-200kg's of sardines being thrown into the bay each day, a real treat for sharks who would not normally be exposed to the enticing natural smell of sardines at this time of the year in this area. One needs to also consider the poor waste management, with septic tanks leaching raw sewerage into the bay. These olfactory corridors being created in the bay are conducive to attracting sharks - even if only on the rare occasion, as was the case this time”. There are many examples around the world where abattoirs and sewage plants have caused sharks to be drawn to an area and then into conflict with water users by biting them. Once the source of olfaction or waste discharge was removed the bites ceased.

Addison also said that “if the shark in question is indeed a Tiger, they are by nature patient yet determined sharks and once they have decided on a meal are pretty focused on achieving their goal. I have spent nearly a thousand hours a year in the water with tigers over more than a decade using primarily sardines as bait and then also having come across tigers scavenging on dead turtles and whales - none of these events has resulted in the slightest aggression from this particular species towards myself or fellow divers and snorkellers, but I have often seen or experienced the exploratory and inquisitive nature of these sharks when they have mouthed a

camera or floating buoy. These outcomes proved to be harmless when directed at an aluminium housing or inch thick moulded plastic buoy but would have been very different if these investigations had been focussed on our puny bodies - but they weren't."

According to Addison, "the last thing we want to happen here is for sharks to get the bad reputation when better management of a marine park should be the lesson learned. The lesson here is that authorities need to implement areas of segregated and wise use, so that the interaction between humans and the ocean can be managed more effectively. Pete was a victim of circumstance and I wish him a speedy and full recovery".

Bear in mind that this is the second bite at Ponta in over twenty years of post war beach and marine tourism, and for more than half a century if you take the pre-war beach tourism to the area into account. This is a remarkable statistic when you consider that there are not and have never been shark nets on the entire Mozambican coast or within 250km of Ponta to the south.

SOURCE: Olivia 'OJ' Symcox, East Coast Radio (Durban), December 30, 2009,
<http://www.ecr.co.za/kagiso/content/en/east-coast-radio/east-coast-radio-blogs-angling-report?oid=521942&sn=Detail&pid=490476&Shark-attack-%E2%80%93-the-family-speaks>