



**ACTIVITY:** Swimming

**CASE:** [GSAF 2010.09.21](#)

**DATE:** Tuesday September 21, 2010

**LOCATION:** The attack took place in the Indian Ocean between Dyer Island and Pearly Beach, Western Cape Province, South Africa.

**NAME:** Khanyisile Momoza

**DESCRIPTION:** He was a 29-year-old male. He may have been wearing a mask and snorkel.



*Khanyisile Momoza*

**BACKGROUND**

**MOON PHASE:** Full Moon, September 23, 2010

**ENVIRONMENT:** Perlemoen (also known as abalone) may be harvested with a permit. However, where the shellfish occur and few jobs are available, the high price of the meat (to £25 a kilo) is a strong enticement to enter the illegal trade.

**NARRATIVE:** Khanyisile Momoza was among a group of poachers who harvested perlemoen at Dyer Island about once a week. They left the mainland at 06h00, and swam to the island three miles offshore, arriving there about 08h00. The men were swimming back to shore with their catch when the attack took place. "We were swimming in a group but [Momoza] was a bit behind us. [The shark] jumped out of the water with him and then it took him down," said one of his friends. "We just swam, we didn't look back "

The survivors admitted they had been too scared for their own lives to help Momoza, and raced back to dry land. Once ashore, the group alerted authorities to the tragedy.

**SPECIES:** The attack was thought to involve a white shark.

# Great white kills poacher

'There was screaming and crying. We just swam. We didn't look back'

LEILA SAMODIEN and NEO MADITLA

A 29-YEAR-OLD perlemoen poacher watched in horror as a great white shark clamped his friend's thigh in its jaws, reared out of the water and then pulled him under. "There was screaming and crying," he said. "We just swam. We didn't look back."

Khanyisile Momoza, 29, was attacked on Tuesday between Dyer Island and Pearly Beach. His body washed up on Pearly Beach on Wednesday.

Momoza's friend, who refused to be named because he is a perlemoen poacher, admitted that he, Momoza and 10 others had been poaching when the shark attacked.

They had left Pearly Beach at 6am that morning and swam for two hours to Dyer Island, about 5km from the shore.

After they'd made their catch and had slung it in bags about their waists, they began to swim back. But Momoza – "Mdu" – would not reach the beach. "We were swimming in a group but Mdu was a bit behind us," his friends said.

They heard screams and, when they turned to see what was happening, a great white shark breached the water, clutching Momoza's leg in its teeth.

"It jumped out of the water with him and then it took him down," he said.

The men, some of whom screamed and cried in horror when they saw what had happened to Momoza, were too scared to help him. They swam as hard as they could for Pearly Beach, where they notified the authorities and the community of Eluxolweni – the informal settlement where Momoza lived.

Police divers were called out to search for Momoza, but did not find anything. The next day his body washed up near the showers on Pearly Beach.

Momoza's friend said their group poached perlemoen about once a week. He would not divulge how much money they made from the trade; however, he said that in the small holiday town about 20km from Gansbaai there were very few



KILLED: Khanyisile Momoza's friends heard screams as he was pulled under.



GIRLFRIEND: Zandile Mlahlwa said Khanyisile 'treated me right'.



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job opportunities for young people.

Most of them could either work on farms far from their homes for R60 a day, or sell flowers for 25 cents each.

"That is not enough to buy food and clothes, support your family and go home to the Eastern Cape," he said.

But while the shark attack has spooked the poachers who have not gone back into the sea all week, the poacher said he doubted if it would keep them out of the sea for good. A shark had attacked a poacher two years ago, and that had not deterred them.

But he said: "I've decided to stop, but I don't know how else I can make money. I don't know how I will eat."

Momoza's girlfriend, Zandile Mlahlwa, described him as a friendly man who enjoyed playing soccer in Gansbaai at weekends.

"He treated me right," she said.

His mother, Sindiswa Momoza, who lives and works in Johannesburg, said by phone that she was struggling to get a death certificate in order to bury him in the Eastern Cape.

Her son was a quiet man who kept to himself. She had last seen him in December when the family got together in the Eastern Cape. She knew his son was working as a fisherman and he often sent money home to the family.

In 2007, then Environmental Affairs Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk announced that wild perlemoen were on the brink of extinction, and banned their harvesting. The ban was lifted by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism in June. Fishermen need a permit to catch perlemoen and there is a cumulative allowable catch of 150 tons for each permit holder. There are currently only 302 permit holders.

Dyer Island is a nature reserve closed to the public. Whale watching and shark cage-diving are allowed nearby. There is a colony of penguins on the island.

**Poacher killed by great white shark**  
***A poacher in South Africa has been eaten by a great white shark during an illegal fishing trip.***

The attack took place on Tuesday between Dyer Island and Pearly Beach, east of Cape Town. Khanyisile Momoza, 29, was attacked as he harvested valuable perlemoen shells in the waters near Gansbaai in South Africa.

The fisherman was among a group of 12 poachers who had tried to swim to safety after spotting the shark in shallow waters. A friend of Mr Momoza, who witnessed the attack, said: "There was screaming and crying. We just swam, we didn't look back. We were swimming in a group but he was a bit behind us. It jumped out of the water with him and then it took him down."

The attack took place on Tuesday between Dyer Island and Pearly Beach, east of Cape Town.

In an interview with the Weekend Argus local newspaper, the victim's friend told how the poaching group had left the beach at 6am and swam for two hours before reaching the island three miles offshore, where they began hunting for perlemoen shellfish.

The men were swimming back to shore with their catch when the great white approached.

The survivors admitted they had been too scared for their own lives to help the stricken swimmer and raced back to dry land. Once ashore the group alerted authorities to the tragedy.

Illegal harvesting of perlemoen is big business in South Africa, where the valuable shellfish are common along coastal areas. The molluscs' fleshy insides are considered a delicacy similar to oysters, and either served raw or cooked in seafood dishes. But widespread farming of the shells has sparked fears the population could plummet.

In 2007 South African authorities listed the species, also known as abalone, as endangered with the global wildlife protection body CITES. The restrictions were loosened in July this year, although it remains illegal to harvest perlemeon without a licence. However hundreds of local fishermen are believed to continue to work in the illegal trade. Many poor workers risk arrest or injury to hunt for the wild shells, whose meat can be worth up to £25 a kilo. The shark attack victim's friend told the *Argus* his group went perlemoen fishing around once a week and needed the money to provide food for their families.

Gans Bay, known in Afrikaans as Gansbaai, is famously the centre of South Africa's great white shark population. In recent years some experts have warned the increase in commercial "shark dive tourism" has encouraged great whites to inhabit shallower waters. Every day hundreds of tourists pay to experience a close encounter with the creatures, which are enticed with food to come close to boats. Some fear the sharks are now commonly inhabiting waters where humans are more likely to be swimming or working.

The poacher is the second person this year to be killed by a shark in South Africa. In January tourist Lloyd Skinner was killed by a great white as he swam a few metres off the beach in Fish Hoek near Cape Town. Shocked holiday-makers watched from the shore as the 47-year-old was pulled underwater. Rescuers later searched for the Zimbabwean's body but found only his goggles.

**SOURCE:** Stewart Maclean, September 25, 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/southafrica/8024829/Poacher-killed-by-great-white-shark.html>