

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: [GSAF 2012.03.06.b](#)

DATE: Tuesday March 6, 2012

LOCATION: The incident took place at Opunake on the southwest coast of Taranaki, North Island, New Zealand.
39°27'9"S, 173°51'17E

NAME: Peter Garrett

DESCRIPTION: He is a 43-year-old male and was wearing a wetsuit with short legs and short arms.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: At 19h00, New Plymouth recorded visibility of 12 miles. The air temperature was 64 F, dew point 56°F, humidity 68%, sea level pressure 30.14 inches and wind direction was West at 3.5 mph,

MOON PHASE: Waxing Gibbous, 92% of the Moon was illuminated. Full Moon, March 8, 2012.

ENVIRONMENT: According to Bruce, surfers occasionally saw sharks in the water. "They don't usually cause trouble ... but it was right on dusk which is feeding time for shark."

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 100 metres

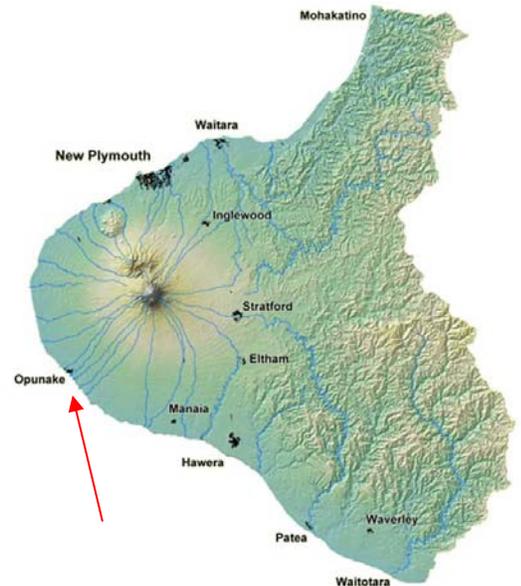
TIME: 19h00 (dusk)

NARRATIVE: Two veterinarians, Matt Thomas and James Bruce, were surfing nearby and heard Garrett shriek, thrash about and head to shore. The men were following Garrett ashore when the shark started circling them, then nudged Bruce and "tried to get his fins" but made no attempt to bite him.

INJURY: The surfer sustained 10 lacerations, about 2 cm deep on his left calf.

FIRST AID: "We got some iodine and bandages and fixed him up," said Thomas. "[Garrett] said he'd go straight to a doctor." The vets took photographs of Garrett's wounds (see page 4)

SPECIES: Not identified, but the surfer said the shark was three feet in length.



Opunake Beach

NZ surfer attacked by shark off Taranaki coast

A surfer was left with 10 bloody tooth-marks after being attacked by a shark off the coast of Taranaki at dusk yesterday.

Peter Garrett suffered the cuts, each about 2cm deep, when a shark mauled him while he was out on the Arawhata Roadsurf break, just north of Opunake about 7pm.

Mr Garrett, a New Zealander who has been living in Ireland for the last 15 years, was treated on the beach by two veterinarians who had been surfing nearby, Fairfax reported today.

James Bruce, an Eltham vet, was surfing with Manaia vet Matt Thomas when they saw the shark attempt to take a bite out of the surfer. "I heard him shrieking, he was freaking out and thrashing around. He kind of kicked it off him and went in on the next couple of waves and went straight for the rocks," Mr Bruce said.

The "interested" shark was unperturbed by being shunted away, and headed towards the pair surfing nearby. "We came in when it started circling us," Mr Thomas said. "It nudged my mate Brucey and tried to get his fins. Then I was like, bugger this, I'm going in."

Once on shore the pair treated Mr Garrett's cuts with iodine and bandages, before he headed to a doctor. "He was bleeding quite a bit, you could tell from the teeth marks it could've been more serious."

Sharks were occasionally spotted in the surf although they usually didn't attack or cause trouble. Neither man knew what kind of shark it was.

SOURCE: NZ Herald, Wednesday Mar 7, 2011, http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10790340

Shark Attacks Surfer

A middle-aged man attacked by a shark off the Taranaki coast just on dusk last night was patched up by a couple of vets before heading off to see a doctor.

Peter Garrett, a New Zealander who has lived in Ireland for the past 15 years, was surfing 100m offshore at the Arawhata Rd surf break a few kilometres north of Opunake when he was mauled about 7pm.

Mr Garrett, home on a three-month holiday, suffered 10 lacerations, about 2cm deep, but was able to paddle clear.

Matt Thomas and James Bruce, who work as vets in Manaia and Eltham respectively, were surfing nearby when they saw and heard Mr Garrett panicking. "I heard him shrieking, he was freaking out and thrashing around," Mr Bruce said. "He kind of kicked it off him and went in on the next couple of waves and went straight for the rocks."

The men followed Mr Garrett ashore when the shark turned its attention toward them. "We came in when it started circling us," Mr Thomas said. "It nudged my mate Brucey and tried to get his fins. Then I was like, bugger this, I'm going in."

When they got to shore Mr Garrett showed them his wounds and they went to get medical supplies from a work vehicle. "We got some iodine and some bandages and fixed him up. He said he'd go straight to a doctor," Mr Thomas said.

Mr Garrett felt dizzy when he got out of the water but hadn't checked in to the emergency department at Taranaki Base Hospital last night.

The vets, who took photographs of Mr Garrett's wounds, said he was still able to walk and thought he was OK to drive. "He was bleeding quite a bit, you could tell from the teeth marks it could've been more serious," Mr Thomas said.

Mr Bruce said although surfers occasionally saw sharks in the water, it was unusual for one to attack. "They don't usually cause trouble, it's pretty uncommon. But it was right on dusk which is feeding time for sharks too." He was also surprised at the shark's determination. "It kept coming back too, it didn't just happen and then get scared off, it was pretty interested."

Neither of the men knew what kind of shark it was. "It could be the return of the Taranaki terror," Mr Bruce joked, referring to a six-metre great white that hounded fishermen during a couple of recent summers. He said surfers should keep an eye out for the shark.

SOURCE: Taranaki Daily News, March 7, 2012, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/taranaki-daily-news/news/6534532/Shark-attacks-surfer>

Surfer shrugs off shark attack

An Auckland man attacked by a shark at a Taranaki surf break on Tuesday night said it felt like being bitten by a playful rottweiler with extra-sharp teeth.

Speaking from Opunake last night, Peter Garrett, 43, said his encounter with a hungry three-foot shark at Arawhata Rd, north of Opunake, started with a bump to his board.

"The next thing there was a shark chomping my leg," Garrett said. "It was about the pressure of a rottweiler playing with you and biting."

The shark was belly-up, lethargically lulling around on his leg, he said.

"I just shook it and said 'f*** off'."

The shark released its grip and came back for another go so Garrett kicked it with his flipper.

The bite left him with lacerations on his leg and he paddled to shore leaving a trail of blood.

Garrett said there were several other surfers in the water but he was the only one wearing a wetsuit with short legs and short sleeves.

After losing interest in Garrett, the shark started bumping the boards of other surfers, he said.

Two Manaia vets, who had also been out in the surf, helped Garrett sterilise and dress the wounds on shore and a doctor checked the wounds yesterday.

Garrett is a construction worker originally from Auckland but has been based in Ireland for the past 10 years. He had been back in New Zealand for two months and is flying back to Ireland at the end of the month. He has been knee boarding since 1994 and surfing since he was a kid and has seen only one other shark while surfing.

Niwa principal scientist Malcolm Francis said the shark probably mistook Garrett for a seal.

DOC marine scientist Clinton Duffy said the gashes didn't appear to be consistent with a great white shark, ruling out the return of the "Taranaki Terror".

"If the Taranaki Terror ever bit anybody I don't think there'd be much left to pick up. A great white would've inflicted much more serious injuries on him," he said.

SOURCE: John Anthony and Kirsty McMurray, Auckland Now, March 8, 2012, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/auckland/local-news/6542767/Surfer-shrugs-off-shark-attack>



Peter Garrett received little sympathy from Murray Weir, left, Paul Anderson and Bryan Wallbutton when they met for a beer in Opunake to toast Mr Garrett's close shave with a shark on Tuesday.

ANDY JACKSON/FAIRFAX NZ

ACC pays for shark injuries

\$150m has been paid out over four years to people who have been attacked by animals. Twenty people have received ACC payouts for injuries by sharks so far this year.

It has been revealed that in the past four years, the organisation has paid out more than \$150 million to people who have been kicked, butted or bitten by pets and other animals.

Information provided to the Herald by the Accident Compensation Corporation shows that between 2008 and June this year more than 300,000 animal-injury claims were accepted, at a cost of more than \$150 million.

This year alone, \$21,139,467 has been paid on 73,104 claims - including 20 for injuries caused by sharks. Privacy laws prevented ACC from disclosing the full details.

But most related to shark "bites" or people being injured or stabbed by tails or spikes. One claimant said they were out on the water fishing and "a shark bit my middle finger".

Other descriptions included being stabbed by a shark tail on the left forearm and being bitten by a shark on the right thumb.

ACC could not give a full break-down of the other animal claims made between 2008 and this year, but was able to tell the Herald they related to kicks, butts and bites from cattle, deer, dogs, horse, sheep and "other" animals.

This year they had accepted 2631 claims for injuries caused by cats, 2088 for spiders, 80 for goats and 8651 for dogs.

Almost 60,000 other claims have been made this year where the injured person has specified the offending animal in the "other" category.

ACC's website gives the definition of a physical injury as something that causes "actual damage" to the body. An actual diagnosis of the injury is required, not just a diagnosis of pain.

Physical injuries can include: wounds, lacerations, contusions, burns, sprains and strains; fractures, amputations or dislocations; infections or diseases caused at work by performing a particular task; blindness and poisoning.

Many of these injuries can obviously be inflicted by an animal.

Attacks rare but terrifying

A surfer bitten in the calf in Taranaki and a teenage girl nipped in the hip while bodyboarding in Invercargill are two recent survivors of shark attacks in New Zealand waters.

Aucklander Peter Garrett was surfing about 100m offshore near Opunake in March when a shark bit his leg. Onlookers told the Herald Mr Garrett was "shrieking and thrashing about" in the water before frantically swimming to shore. A vet who was surfing nearby treated the "nasty bite" on the man's calf. At the time, DoC marine scientist Clinton Duffy said Mr Garrett was unlucky to get bitten, but lucky to survive.

In 2010, Invercargill teen Lydia Ward fought off a shark after it sank its teeth into her hip. She was boogie boarding with her brother when the shark bit through her wetsuit. She wasn't seriously

injured, but had to hit it away with her board after it lunged at her.

Mr Duffy said on average there were two unprovoked shark bites a year, usually with minor injuries.

The damage

Accepted claims for injuries by animals

2008 \$37m for 77,865 claims

2009 \$35m for 79,135 claims

2010 \$29.7m for 72,962 claims

2011 \$27.6m for 78,987 claims

2012 (to date) \$21.1m for 73,104 claims

Total: \$150.4m

Claims by animal for 2012

2631 cat

8651 dog

80 goat

20 shark

2088 spider

59,634 other

SOURCE: The New Zealand Herald, Monday Sep 24, 2012,
http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10836075