

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: [GSAF 2012.12.19](#)

DATE: Monday December 19, 2012

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Indian Ocean at Trigg Beach, off Perth, Western Australia.

NAME: Richard Wands

DESCRIPTION: He is a 33-year-old male, from Cottesloe, a drilling engineer with a Norwegian oil company.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: At 08h30, Perth recorded clear skies. The air temperature was 68°F, dew point 46.4°F, humidity 46%, sea level pressure 30.01 inches, and wind direction was ESE at 9.2 mph.

MOON PHASE: Waxing Crescent, 39% of the Moon was illuminated. First Quarter, December 20, 2012.

ENVIRONMENT: A group of 13 tiger sharks were 20 to 30 metres from the shore, feeding on the carcass of a dolphin that washed up near the water's edge at 05h30 the same morning.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 30 metres

TIME: 08h30

NARRATIVE: About 10 surfers were in the water when a shark circled Wands and rammed his surfboard. Using his board, the surfer struck the shark's face and exited the water.

INJURY: The surfer was not injured by the shark.

SPECIES: The incident involved a tiger shark, said to be six feet in length.

NOTE: The shark merely exhibited curiosity. The surfer displayed aggression, the shark did not.

Surfer uses board to fight off shark

A surfer has described how he fought off a 2m shark when a feeding frenzy involving up to 16 sharks erupted at South Trigg beach yesterday.

Rich Wands, 33, of Cottesloe, said he was surfing 30m offshore about 8.30am when the shark started to circle him and swam beneath his board. "I was basically trying to follow it as it circled me, then it came round and it rammed me," he said.

The drilling engineer picked up his board and used it to smash the shark's face again and again, until it swam away, but it came around and went for him again.

"It was going to happen, this was a final attack," he said. "I had to do something or I was going to lose an arm or a leg."



"Fighting back: Rich Wands had a narrow escape at South Trigg beach."

He hit the shark again, then yelled to alert others in the water and paddled furiously to shore. Only when he reached the sand did he realise he had been in the middle of a feeding frenzy.

He ran about 300m and alerted a surf lifesaving officer, who sounded the alarm and shut Trigg and Scarborough beaches, which remained closed until about 4pm.

About 10 other surfers were with Mr Wands and children were playing in the shallows and all paddled in when the alarm sounded. Brody Martin, 12, was knee-deep in water when he saw a metre-long shark about 10 metres away. "I felt excited. I've never seen a shark before," he said. He walked back to shore after his mother's friend screamed at him to get out of the water.

Hundreds of people watched as Tiger sharks swarmed only 20 to 30m off shore, feasting on a dolphin carcass for about four hours. The stranded dolphin washed up near the water's edge about 5.30am.

Department of Fisheries regional manager Tony Cappelluti said while feeding in this way was not unusual for this species, it was rare they swarmed in a crowded metropolitan area. He said the department had no plans to hunt the sharks because the beaches had been cleared successfully and no one was at risk.

Fisheries Minister Norman Moore said the authority to kill a shark lay with the director-general of the Department of Fisheries and could only happen if a shark posed an "imminent threat" to humans.

City of Stirling beach services coordinator John Snook said yesterday's incident was extremely unusual. "Where the sharks are would probably be not more than 2 to 2.5m deep and having them this close to the shore . . . is pretty unusual," he said.

SOURCE: Rebecca Trigger and Elle Farcic, The West Australian, December 20, 2012, <http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-/breaking/15679821/surfer-uses-board-to-fight-off-shark/>

Brit surfer fights off 6ft tiger shark by bashing it with his board in Australia

- ***Richards Wands was 150ft from the beach when he saw the shark***
- ***'The heart-stopping moment was the most frightening thing ever'***
- ***The shark was one of 13 feeding on a dolphin carcass nearby***
- ***The beach in Perth, Western Australia, has been closed indefinitely***

A British surfer has told of his terror as he fought off a 6ft tiger shark in Australia.

Richard Wands, 33, hit the shark with his board, and yelled to alert fellow surfers at Trigg Beach, off Perth, Western Australia. He made it back to the beach, more than 150ft away, and alerted a surf life-saving officer.

Helicopters have been circling overhead, with City of Stirling officers patrolling the beaches to prevent people entering the water.

Mr Wands, a keen surfer from Perth, Scotland, emigrated eight months ago to become a driller with a Norwegian oil company and pursue his love of surfing. He described the Wednesday morning encounter as 'the most frightening thing ever.'

The surfer had just completed three to four waves when he spotted the tiger shark but did not know it was one of 13 feeding on the carcass of a dolphin.

The shark circled Mr Wands and went under his board. He saw its head and tail and was 'petrified.'

'It was a heart-stopping moment and was the meanest, nastiest, most frightening thing ever,' Mr Wands said during interviews with Australian television and radio.

The tiger shark was within arm's reach of him and at one point seemed to be coming straight for him so Mr Wands got off his board and used it to try and defend himself. 'I saw it turn and it came straight for me, in a dead straight line, undeviating, and it genuinely felt like a true final approach, as it were. It definitely felt super-threatening and it wasn't changing its course. I speared the board into the water to try and deter it. That seemed to work but it came back again so I used the board again and it moved away. I was totally scared and definitely thought I would be coming out of the water with one appendage fewer.'



Richard Wands



Feeding frenzy: Tiger sharks patrol Trigg Beach and get just a few feet from the beach

Mr Wands continued: 'I genuinely think this thing was looking for a limb, if not more than that. If it had struck blood my gut feeling is that might have encouraged the other sharks to get involved as well, and then there might be a different story today. Luckily enough a wave happened to pitch up at the most convenient moment ever and I just belly-flopped onto it and just ran it in on my front. This was definitely a threat, I was utterly convinced.'

He admitted the incident has put him off his hobby, and added: 'Next time, I may not be so lucky.'

Mr Wands was brought up in Perth in Scotland with twin brother Christopher and sister Olivia. He took up surfing when he was eight while on regular summer holidays with his family in Caithness and has enjoyed the sport around the world, including Hawaii, Fiji and New Zealand. He worked in the oil industry in Aberdeen but emigrated to Australia eight months ago.

His father Andrew, from Canisbay, yesterday spoke of his relief that his son had escaped unscathed. His son had contacted him to explain what had happened and assure him he was none the worse for his terrifying encounter. He said: 'I was a little bit surprised but just relieved he was okay. It must have been a scary experience.'

Photographers ave been capturing the feeding frenzy at Trigg Beach, where tiger sharks have been lurking just a few feet away from the shore.

SOURCE: Alex Gore, Mail Online, December 20, 2012, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2251545/British-engineer-fends-shark-bashing-board-Australia.html>



Beneath the surface: A tiger shark swims close to the shore



People have been flocking to Trigg Beach to catch a glimpse of the tiger sharks