

Australia hunts for killer shark with spear in throat

December 30 2014



Experts say attacks by sharks are increasing as water sports become more popular

A teenager who escaped a shark attack that killed his friend in western Australia has described how he fired his spear gun into the suspected great white as authorities searched for the animal Tuesday.

The victim, named by local media as 17-year-old Jay Muscat, died after he was bitten on the leg by a shark while spear-fishing off Cheynes

Beach, near Albany in the southern tip of Western Australia (WA) state, on Monday.

His friend Matt Pullella wrote on Facebook that "the shark hit me first then attacked Jay", The West Australian reported.

"The shark turned and came for me, I pushed the speargun down its throat and fired the gun!" he wrote, adding that he estimated the animal to measure four to five metres (13-16 feet) long.

"This is something no one should ever have to see."

WA's Department of Fisheries said Cheynes Beach would remain closed while equipment was deployed from boats to try and catch the shark, adding that it was most likely to be a great white.

"One of them (boats) will be setting (drum) lines, the other will be doing patrols in the nearby regions," Department of Fisheries spokesman Rick Fletcher told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

"One of the people involved in the attack actually shot at the shark with a spear gun, so the shark may be injured so we are going to have a look to see if we can find the shark if that is the case."

The attack was the second fatal mauling in Australia since December 15, when a teenager was attacked while swimming near Rudder Reef off Port Douglas, northeast Australia.

The great white shark

World's largest predatory fish

Known to eat:
sea lions
seals
small toothed whales
sea turtles
squid
other sharks
carriion

300 teeth in
up to 7 rows

Max tooth length:
5.7 cm

Acute **hearing**
in tiny ears
behind eyes

Retina split
for day and
night vision

Can **smell** 1 drop of
blood in 10 billion drops
of water

Rough skin with a
lateral line sensitive
to movement 250 m
away

Big, fat, oily liver helps
shark float

Skeleton made of cartilage,
not bone

Pores on snout
can detect power
and direction of
electrical currents

Length: 4.6 - 6 m

Weight average: 1,300 kg

Max weight: about 2,200 kg

Swim speed:
up to 50 kph

Range



One individual great white has been
tracked swimming from South Africa
to Australia

Threats:

Commercial fishing for fins
Sport fishing
Entanglements
Destruction of near-shore
habitats

**IUCN
conservation status:**
Vulnerable

*Woods Hole
Oceanographic Institution,
Cape Cod, Massachusetts

Attack:

Fast, surprise,
from below, with
powerful bite

Most great white bites
on humans are not fatal,
their bites are thought to
be "sample biting"



► New study finds
individuals can live
into their 70s*

Carcharodon carcharias

Reach maturity at around
15 years

Species existence:
350 - 400 million years

Source: National Geographic/Livescience.com/IUCN/ocean.si.edu

AFP

Factfile on great white sharks

A young surfer lost parts of both arms in an attack by two [great white sharks](#) off the south coast of Western Australia in October, prompting officials to catch and kill two of the animals in the area.

The state government had earlier this year abandoned a controversial catch-and-kill policy—where sharks are caught on large hooks attached to floating drums placed off beaches—after objections from the state's

environmental agency.

Conservationists had also criticised the policy and called on authorities to instead use non-lethal methods to reduce risks, such as closing beaches and erecting warning signs.

Experts say attacks by [sharks](#), which are common in Australian waters, are increasing as water sports become more popular.

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