

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

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

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

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

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



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

Carcharodon carcharias
Reach maturity at around 15 years

Species existence:
350 - 400 million years



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"

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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