

The Great white shark has the ability to heal from severe trauma in no time at all !

The summer months and the inshore season are slowly drawing to a close and the sharks should be moving back to the island for a winter full of exciting activity. They will now be pursuing their agile prey the cape fur seal, *Arctocephalus pusillus*.



This summer season in Jouberts Dam has provided me with the opportunity to identify many individual animals assigning names to most and getting familiar with their individual behavioural traits.

Two sharks, Kimbo and Gash really stick out in my mind. Unfortunately they were injured previously but by no means impeded in their activities around our vessel, Shark Team.

After observing the wounds these sharks had sustained I started to wonder how long it would take them to heal. I therefore monitored them closely over the next few months taking photos wherever possible.

Very little information exists on healing rates with great white sharks. We suspect they have the ability to heal rapidly, having highly efficient immune systems and showing low incidences of fatal diseases such as cancer.

These 2 sharks have both shown evidence of significant healing capabilities during their stay with us in Jouberts Dam.

There are many reasons for scarring on the sharks we observe. Some common reasons may be boat propellers, jagged objects, fishing lines, seal bites and fishermen's knives amongst others.

The above are just some of the threats white sharks face on a daily basis but others may include poaching for their jaws, teeth and fins, by-catch from commercial fisheries, sports fishing, habitat degradation, pollution and prey source depletion.

After several months of observation I can now conclude that white sharks can recover rapidly from trauma, within a matter of weeks

Kimbo:



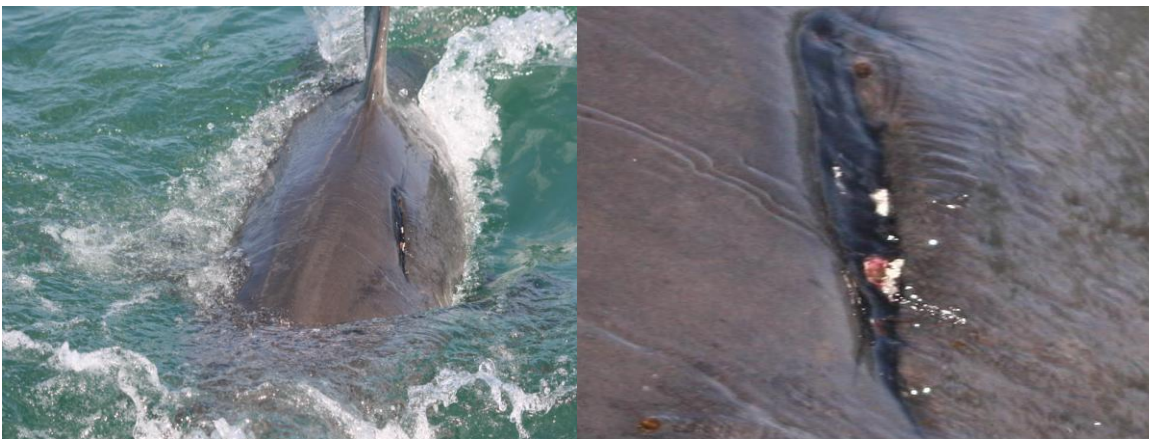
Size: 2.0 metre female,
Distinguishing features: Tick shaped pigmentation right hand side of dorsal.
Injury: +/- 20 cm long, +/-3 cm deep cut, left hand side of dorsal surface between dorsal fin and eye.

First observed **28/11/08** during an afternoon trip and still remains with us at the present time, last seen **09/02/09**.

28/11/08 PM:



18/12/08 AM:



In **3 weeks** Kimbo had basically healed from the deep slice in her back. All that remains is black scar tissue showing that she has made a full recovery.

Gash:



Size: 2.5 metre female

Distinguishing features: Gaping wound on dorsal surface, anterior to the dorsal fin.

Injury: Gash +/- 30cm in diameter and +/- 10 cm deep on the dorsal surface. The vertebrae were visible initially.

First observed **15/12/08** and regularly until **04/01/09**. She disappeared until **11/02/09** when she was recently sighted, where did she go in-between? I wish I had the answers for you!

15/12/08 PM:



11/02/09 AM:



Her injuries although undoubtedly painful, never seemed to impede Gash's movement or activity around the boat as she was quite a character, what we call a 'player'. She was very active and more than capable of stealing bait from time to time.

Many of the smaller slices spreading out from the core of the wound have healed showing black scar tissue. The depth of the wound has decreased significantly (estimated at +/- 4 cm) and scar tissue is beginning to cover the whole gash. I hope Gash will stay around long enough to make a full recovery and allow me to track her progress. I will keep you updated on her progress.

I was absolutely astonished at the rate at which Gash had recovered from what would be fatal to humans. These animals really are majestic and never cease to amaze me, the more I learn about them the more I want to learn!

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White Shark Projects