

THE **REEF** SEEKER



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BAHAMAS FATAL SHARK ATTACK

By now you've probably heard about Jordan Lindsey, the 21-year-old from Torrance who was killed in the Bahamas during a snorkeling excursion. Horrible story and obviously the worst nightmare for a parent, as part of the story says they tried to call out to warn her as the first shark approached, but that she apparently didn't hear them.

There has been much speculation on-line in scuba forums - none of it backed up by any evidence - of what may have prompted this horrific event. But this incident does have things in common with other incidents of shark bites.

First and foremost is that it occurred at the surface. It's been shown that people splashing on the surface - snorkeling, surfing, swimming, etc. - send out vibrations similar to those of a wounded fish. As sharks are essentially the garbage disposals of the ocean whose job it is to eat the things that are dead and dying, they may sense these vibrations, seek out the source, and initiate a "test bite" to see what's what. Sometimes, that's the only bite. In this case, it may have proved to be fatal.

Having said that, you shouldn't think that any time you're on the surface and kicking back to shore

or the boat, that you're suddenly going to appear on a shark's radar. I've been on the surface during shark feeds in Yap and I've never been approached by a shark nor do I know of anyone else there that's ever been bitten, let alone bumped. And you would think, with dozens and dozens of sharks around, that that would be a scenario which could prove problematic, yet the facts don't point to that.

Sometimes, it's just a case of wrong place at the wrong time. The news reports are mentioning three sharks involved and making it sound like a co-ordinated attack. But these aren't the Velociraptors from "Jurassic Park." Sharks simply don't work together that way.

My personal SPECULATION is that, for some unknown reason, the first bite, and likely the most severe given the general size of these animals, was from a Tiger Shark (which was reported as spotted right before the attack). I think the other two sharks were coincidentally in the area and once the first bite occurred, they may have reacted to the blood and commotion in the water.

One of my students - Tommy Holmes - was bitten by a shark in Hawaii many years ago. (And I seem to recall it was a Tiger but I'm not 100% certain.) Tommy and his girlfriend were snorkeling

off of Maui when he looked down and saw the shark coming up. He managed to push his girlfriend away and tuck into a fetal position and got bitten on the butt. He was able to get himself to shore and got some stitches and an amazing story to tell. But the common thread here is he was on the surface.

Worldwide, there are 5 or 6 fatal shark attacks each year. They're newsworthy because they're rare and they play into some of our worst fears. But, at least statistically speaking, the odds of it happening to you are very slim, the Bahamas incident notwithstanding. (I was just reading a stat that said more people are killed each year from taking selfies than from sharks.) As best you can, be aware of your surroundings. Sharks are generally known to attack from below and behind. So do 180s to reassure yourself. And if there are sharks in the area and you feel nervous about it, get out of the water as calmly as you can.

What happened in the Bahamas is truly awful on many levels. But let's also remember that when we go into the ocean, the waters aren't "infested" (a pejorative term) with sharks or anything else. It's their home. It's where they live. WE'RE the ones who are the intruders. Don't blame the sharks for doing what evolution has programmed them to do.



NEW CUBA TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS ANNOUNCED

Scuba Cuba? Maybe, maybe not.

Since January of 2017, Reef Seekers official position about travel to Cuba has been that we're not comfortable with it due to the fear of the Trump administration pulling the rug out from under us. And in early June, that rug got yanked a bit, if not wholly pulled.

New travel restrictions were announced that may affect you if you've got a Cuba trip planned. "This Administration has made a strategic decision to reverse the loosening of sanctions and other restrictions on the Cuban regime," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said. The new restrictions mean no more cruise ship visits, and no travel under "people-to-people" visits used by educational and church groups. There are also new restrictions imposed on passenger and recreational vessels, which means prior specific authorization may be required. This last one would seem to most directly impact dive trips (but in all candor, I've not yet reached out to Aggressor yet to see how this affects their *Jardines Aggressor* trips).

If you have a trip to Cuba already planned, as long as you have made at least one travel-related transaction before June 5 - booking a

flight or hotel, or paying a trip deposit - you should still be okay. (But check with your travel provider.) If you haven't paid for anything yet but you got travel insurance (or if you're just getting antsy about going) see if your insurance will cover a cancellation. It's also very possible that air carriers will cut back on flights due to these new restrictions so, if you're planning on going, make sure you still have a way to get there.

As someone who organizes trips, my concern has always been having a group of 16 lined up and ready to go and then everything changes, leaving me with a huge financial issue. So from my standpoint, this could just be the tip of the iceberg. Trump pledged at his inauguration to cancel (his word, not mine) all Obama-era loosening of regulations on travel and business to Cuba and I'm thinking this is not the end of that purge.

If you've already got a trip planned, double-check with whomever you're going through to make sure everything is still on track. If Cuba's been on your bucket list, you might still be able to go, but it just seems like there will be more hoops to jump through.

VACAYS FOR NEXT YEAR

We've started working on the possibilities for next year. We're already looking into Truk (could also do a Yap add-on to that one) and possibly the Philippines. We skipped Bonaire this year so maybe that goes back on. Every year we choose whether to go back to places we've been (because we know them really well) or to go to new places (because it's always nice to try something different.) It's never an easy choice and you can make arguments so both, so that's why we try to do a little of each. But it's based on your input as well (no sense in scheduling trips no one wants to go on) so feel free to email or call us and let us know what's on your bucket list.

BTW, we're leaving on July 6 for Indonesia and our friends at Murex (Manado) so be sure to keep an eye out on our Reef Seekers FaceBook page for our Daily Top 10 pictures. We'll also be sending two editions of TWARS from there.



2019 DIVING VACATIONS

July 6-18 • Indonesia

August 10-17 • Isla Mujeres

October 12-24 • Maldives

December 4-10 • Cabo Pulmo

WHEN YOU SEE GIANT SEA BASS

Buck and some of the Rainbow Dive group spent time in the Underwater Park over the weekend and spotted seven Giant Sea Bass. Since sightings of these leviathans generally goes up during the summer months, in the Park and elsewhere, this is a good time to remind you how you can be a Citizen Scientist and help out researchers.

If you sight a Giant Sea Bass and have a camera, try to take a picture. Ideally it should be from the side and nose to tail. Then go to (and note no "www"): <https://spottinggiantseabass.msi.ucsb.edu> and report your encounter. The more info you have the better, and they've got some drop-down menus to simplify the report.

They use a spot-pattern algorithm to determine if the animal's already in their database or not and will e-mail you the results. Also, pictures are used strictly for research purposes; you still own all the rights. The info gathered helps them conduct an informal census as well as track the movements of those animals in the database. And the more we know about these animals, the more we can do to protect them and their habitats.

HAVE A HAPPY & SAFE 4TH

Whether you're diving, hanging out at the beach, watching fireworks, BBQing, or whatever, here's hoping you have a happy and safe Fourth of July. And while we're in the patriotic spirit, here's a story along those lines to wind things up . . .

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Sun.	July 28	<i>Catalina Express</i>	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Sat.	Aug. 10	Redondo	Navigation dive (single tank)	\$25
Wed.	14	- CLASS -	- NAUI NITROX -	\$75
Thu.	Sept. 5	Redondo	••• Night Dive •••	\$25
Sat.	14	<i>Catalina Express</i>	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Sat.	21	Redondo	Beach dive (single tank)	\$25
Wed.	25	- CLASS -	- FISH ID -	\$25



A NON-DIVING AMERICANA STORY

Since Independence Day is this Thursday, I thought this might be an appropriate ending for the July newsletter. And hopefully you already know that Francis Scott Key wrote the words for what became our national anthem. With that in mind, please enjoy . . .

MY GRANDPA TRIED TO SAVE FRANCIS SCOTT KEY'S HOUSE

After my dad died two years ago, my sister and I were going through his stuff and, in the file cabinet where he kept important papers, came across a small mailing tube that looked really old. We could see that the faded writing on the tube read "Mr. Con. Ollweiler, c/o Geo Hartfield, New Hartford, N.Y." We had no idea who George Hartfield was, but I knew that "Con. Ollweiler" was Conrad Ollweiler, my paternal grandfather's father. And we could see there was some sort of a scroll inside so we decided to take a peek.

It was a certificate made out to George Ollweiler (our paternal grandfather) of New Hartford, N.Y., issued in 1908 (when

Grandpa would have been 9 years old), certifying Grandpa as a member of the Francis Scott Key Memorial Association, whose goal was to raise enough money to purchase and preserve the historic home of Francis Scott Key, the man who wrote "The Star Spangled Banner" during the War of 1812.

I have tried to research how much you had to donate to get the certificate but have come up empty. One source I found said they ended up raising around \$30,000 which was a significant sum at the turn of the century. I also have no idea why Grandpa was interested in this. I certainly don't remember him ever mentioning anything like this and it's not like he went around singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" all the time so I don't think it was his favorite song.

For the last two years, I've been meaning to frame and mount the certificate and FINALLY got around to it. As a 100+-year old document, it's pretty fragile and every time I unrolled it and rolled it back up, I'm sure I did some damage. But it still looks pretty cool and I thought you'd all get a kick out of seeing it (bottom of page 4), let alone knowing the story. And there's even a little more.

Although Key wrote "The Star-Spangled Banner" in 1814, it didn't officially become our National Anthem until 1931. Shortly after

Key wrote it (as a poem), it was read aloud at some places in Baltimore (location of Fort McHenry where the battle had taken place) and was eventually published in the local press. It spread nationwide and was set to the tune of an English drinking song. By the late 1800s, it was used unofficially by most military branches as our National Anthem. In 1916, Woodrow Wilson signed an Executive Order declaring it as such, but it wasn't until 1931 that Congress passed a bill to make it official.

There's more to the story on the house too. Basically, the National Park Service - who was eventually in charge of the house - lost it. No kidding. How do you "lose" a house? Here's how.

The house was situated along the

Chesapeake and Ohio Canal that runs through Georgetown. Interestingly, the canal wasn't there when Key bought the house and is thought to be part of the reason he moved his family out, because the canal was going to be dug through his backyard. The house had various owners over the years and at some point, fell into the hands of the feds due to its history. There were various debates about what to do with it and, as best I can tell, around 1947, it had been decided that the house would be preserved. But there was construction going to be done in the area for bridge access over the Potomac to the Pentagon, and the house was in the way. So they decided to painstakingly deconstruct it, apparently photographing it, labeling all the parts, and storing it in a safe place

so it could be reassembled. And when that time came . . . it couldn't be found. It was literally lost.

If you'd like to read a bit more about this part of the story, I found a link to a paper written by one of the National Park Service team members who tried to find the house. Google "Losing Francis Scott Key house." It's a fun read and shows that nothing in Washington has changed. And if you want to read a couple of paragraphs about how "The Star-Spangled Banner" became our national anthem, Google "Star Spangled Banner origin." So the next time you're at some event where the National Anthem is played, realize they're a lot more to the story of how it came to be what it is today.

PICTURE PAGE - Grandpa's certificate

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