



Mossel Bay is the only place in the world where there is a documented report of a Great White Shark feeding at night. This happened in 2005 when a Great White was spotted breaching at night.

# Of seals and sharks

If you walk around the Point on a regular basis you might have noticed that for a while now a group of seals have made the reef off Outer Pool their playground and home.

For many, especially our local surfers, these new visitors have been a cause for concern due to the possibility that they might attract unwanted predators to the area.

Marine scientist, Ryan Johnson from SAMPLA was approached to establish the reasons and the risks that our new friends can bring along.

According to Ryan there is no major cause for concern as for the past year they have been tracking the movements of 13 Great

White Sharks in the waters around Mossel Bay.

Over 1 000 hours have been spent doing this and during this time only one of the 13 ever ventured around the Point but stayed 3 kms off shore. This does not mean however, that they will never swim closer to shore or that they will not come around the Point even if it is not one of their favourite spots.

The reason for the presence of these young seals at the Point was explained by Johnson that the mature bull seals return to Seal Island in early November to claim their territory and to reproduce, having spent the winter out to sea fattening up. The young seals are then forced off the island and seek alternative resting spots such as the Point where they feel safe.

From November the Great White Sharks move into deeper waters as there are not so many seals on and around the island to feed off. They return round May and resume their patrolling of the island, concentrating on the back of the island which is where the launching pad for the seals is situated.

This is where the Great White's behaviour differs because they are hunting and when hunting they drop to a depth of approximately 10m and increase their speed. After feeding, shark will cruise for about 2 - 3 days and that is when these amazing creatures are normally spotted cruising lazily.

Mossel Bay is the only place in the world where there is a documented report of a Great White Shark feeding at night. This happened in 2005 when a Great White was spotted breaching at night. Sharks of about 3 ½ - 4m are seen at Seal Island and Hartenbos with the smaller sharks in the waters of Great Brak River.

Caution should be exercised when swimming or surfing in these areas and it is advisable not to go too deep. Attacks on humans are normally out of curiosity and not for feeding purposes as these are actually tolerant animals who allow us to share the water with them.

For Ryan his most important thing that he is still learning and researching about Great White Sharks as a marine scientist is to learn about the movements and habitats of the sharks so that when we go into the water we will be able to co-exist without having to destroy them.

An International online magazine, beyondblumag.com has been developed which has Mossel Bay contributors and is accessible to anyone. The online magazine can be downloaded for free and has a number of interesting articles and research of the marine life in Mossel Bay.

Soon you will also find live tracking data of the Great White Shark movements on the SAMPLA website, this way you can stay up to date with the sharks' activity in the Bay.

When Ryan was asked about his thoughts on the possible I&J Farm in Mossel Bay he said, "It's like putting a chicken farm in the Kruger National Park."