

**REVIEW OF THE AERIAL SURVEILLANCE FOR  
SHARKS OVER PERTH METROPOLITAN  
WATERS FROM 2000 TO 2004**

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## ABSTRACT

The beaches along the Perth metropolitan coastline offer the residents of Perth a wide variety of recreational possibilities and swimming is a popular activity undertaken by many people. Early in the morning of 6<sup>th</sup> November 2000, a swimmer was killed by a white shark at one of the busiest beaches in the Perth metropolitan area, Cottesloe Beach.

As a result, aerial surveillance patrols for sharks have been conducted from November to January each year since then. Patrols fly twice a day, seven days per week and cover 43 beaches spread over 143 kilometres. Data collected during 2003/04 patrols was compared with information from previous years patrols. In addition, information regarding beach usage was also collected in order to gauge how many users may potentially be at risk from a shark attack.

Numbers of beach users, and swimmers in particular, increased from November to January with peak usage at midday and on weekends. A maximum number of 12 456 people on the Perth metropolitan coast was attained on Boxing Day 2004.

During 2003/04 there was a considerable improvement on the quality and quantity of records kept by pilots and observers. However, although the total number of animals observed in coastal waters increased by a large amount, the number of sharks sighted remained low. Sharks were possibly obscured from view by environmental factors such as glare, the effect of the sea breeze on the water and dark substrate. In view of these factors it was concluded that aerial surveillance for sharks is not an appropriate method for ensuring the safety from shark attack of people swimming at beaches along the Perth metropolitan coast.