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Ontario nurse recovering from shark bite in Mexico



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The Canadian Press
Date: Wednesday Feb. 2, 2011 5:57 PM ET

CANCUN, Mexico — A Canadian nurse who was attacked by a shark in Mexico is expected to spend at least the next week in hospital recovering from her injuries.

Nicole Ross, 38, suffered severe bites to her left arm and leg in the attack late Monday morning as she vacationed at the Cancun Caribe resort.



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Dr. Italo Sampablo, the medical director at Hospiten Cancun, said on Wednesday that Ross was in stable condition, conscious and breathing on her own in the intensive care ward.

Nicole Ross, a Canadian nurse who was attacked by a shark in Mexico, is shown in this undated photo.

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Ross, who works at the Headwaters Health Care Centre in Orangeville, Ont., had a blood transfusion on Tuesday, he said.

The doctor added he didn't know if Ross would be able to use her leg in the future because she lost a lot of muscle tissue when the shark bit her.

Ross's father flew to Mexico and was at her bedside Wednesday. His daughter was reportedly vacationing with a group to celebrate the 50th birthday of a friend and had enjoyed a game of volleyball before taking a swim.

Prof. Stephen Turnbull, a marine biologist and shark expert at the University of New Brunswick, said shark attacks are not uncommon along the coast of Florida.

Juvenile sharks feed in shallower water and can mistake moving human hands and feet for dinner.

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"They're looking for a flash of colour," he said.

Among the horrified witnesses to Monday's attack was Kelly Rowat, 44, a Hyundai sales manager from Moncton, N.B. She was on the second day of her vacation at the hotel next door, the Grand Caribe Real, when she saw the attack.

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Rowat said she was among about 20 to 30 people in the water when the shark swam in close to the beach.

The shark could be seen easily through the clear water, she said, and a lifeguard began blowing a whistle to warn swimmers back onto to the beach.

"When we were coming out I could see people standing up pointing," Rowat recalled. "I could hear people saying, 'Oh my God what's that?'"

She said she turned around and saw the shark swim in front of her. Meanwhile, four men on Sea Doos swarmed the shark so swimmers could get out of the water.

Further down the beach, Ross was still in the water. The shark swam away from the Sea Doos and attacked the nurse.

"The next thing I know, I could see somebody being pulled up onto the Sea Doo and then I saw all the blood and I heard screaming, which would have been Nicole," said Rowat.

A nurse on the beach was telling people to get towels and shirts as Ross lay there in shock, she said. Contrary to reports that Ross was telling people how to bandage her, Rowat said Ross didn't speak at all after being brought to the beach.

Rowat's 15-year-old daughter, Brooklyn, had gone to get something to drink and returned in time to see Ross being pulled from the water.

The teenager raced along the beach to see if she could help and saw Ross's injuries up close.

"Her leg was pretty bad," she said.

"There was a big chunk pulled out of her leg, to the point you could almost see it, see her bone. Her arm wasn't as bad ... a little tear."

The teen said while some in the crowd "freaked out," others were taking pictures.

She wrote on her Facebook wall: "Second day in Cancun and I witnessed a shark attack ... scariest thing of my life!"

The water remains closed to swimmers for now but people can sit on the beach, the teen said. Lifeguards are telling people the closure is due to high waves and cold water but many guests believe it's because of the shark attack.

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