

Tiger SHARKS

Jim Abernethy's Scuba Adventures leads trips to see tiger sharks and great hammerhead sharks for divers without cages. I went in March 2005, leaving from West Palm Beach, Florida, headed for the Bahamas. Rough seas shaped our diving opportunities, allowing us three diving days at Jim's better locations, one day without diving, and three days at a relatively sheltered location which wasn't optimal for attracting tiger sharks. We saw reef sharks too. It sounds weird but when you're on a diving trip and seeing fourteen foot tiger sharks twelve foot great hammerhead sharks, seeing a reef shark that is six to eight feet long seems less daunting..... like seeing little puppies!

Here's Jim loading up the bait before we left at night....



With all that bait onboard, and given that we were on a seven diving day trip, you didn't want to go forward on deck... best to stay in the back of the boat.

Tiger shark biting at the surface bait...



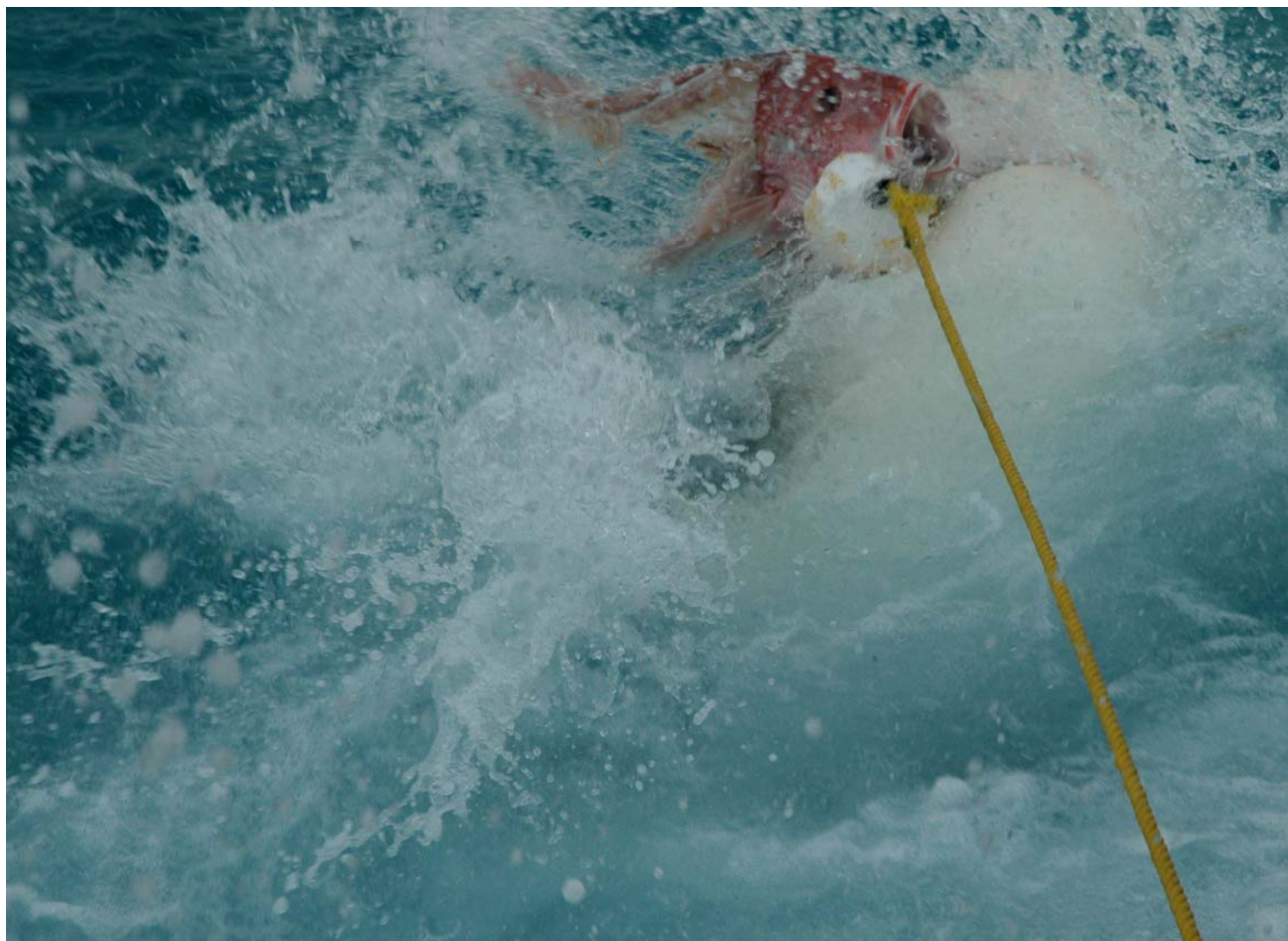
Tiger shark taking a bite...





The surface bait was used to attract tiger sharks, get them to hang around the boat looking for food. Then you dropped into the water, and sank fast to the bottom in order to watch one or more of them patrol in towards some chum crates on the sandy bottom.

Tiger shark chomping on fish head, right at the back of boat !



Here's what it looked like on the bottom. Chum crates and shark master on the left, with photographer/divers scattered around. You really did not want to be too close to those chum crates. They were obviously the focal point of the sharks' attention. If you stayed away from those crates, you were out of the "bite zone" (theoretically, of course). Lemon shark moving in....



The tiger and lemon sharks were graceful, stately in their swimming movement. Not jerky or quick-changing in their swimming movements like shortfin mako sharks. They were quite popular with remoras as you can see on this lemon shark.



The shark master would drag the chum crates all around, playing keep-away with the sharks, to keep them interested and staying in the area. Here's the shark master dragging chum crates away while a tiger shark passes right in front of me.



The tiger and lemon sharks would turn and come in towards you, while seeking out the chum crate. Curious about you, not chomping at you. You side stepped out of their way. If they kept turning towards you, you held out your camera or planted a PVC pipe stick down in front of yourself. When the shark contacted those with its nose, it would turn away from you. You used your camera or stick to maintain a modicum of space... you really didn't want a fourteen footer nosing up on you out of curiosity. Lemon shark getting close....



There were lots of camera strobes flashing as you can imagine. The multiple strobe flashes from divers added paparazzi drama to an approaching tiger shark!





Tiger shark 1, chum crate 0



Tiger shark grabbing some loose chum

A big tiger shark right smack in front of me. Really, you couldn't get much closer without forcing yourself into its mouth...



See what I mean about getting close? This tiger shark passed right in front of me and then turned right in towards that chum crate. A remora tags along looking for scraps. Tiger sharks are exceedingly impressive up close, an electrifying experience



Tiger shark ...





Reef shark

There's lots of dead time spent underwater waiting for sharks to show up or come back. Hang out, shoot photos of anything, blow bubble rings, mess around with the remoras, hang out...



Norbert Wu photograph; copyright Norbert Wu





Remora grabbing some chum



Wary grouper



Here's a photo of me with a tiger shark.

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