



Otter Aquatics Newsletter

No 43. December 2018 /January 2019

Dear swimmers and others

Welcome to the bumper December 2018/January 2019 edition of the Otter Aquatics newsletter. With summer well and truly upon us, we spend a bit more time discussing the various theories of shark attack – both mythical and true – as well as celebrating some amazing feats of endurance swimming, at home and overseas.

Look inside to find:

- 🍷 Date claimers over the Christmas/New Year period
- 🍷 Notable recent endurance swimming feats
- 🍷 How to see in the water: advice to swimmers with poor vision
- 🍷 A book to buy if you're looking for a Christmas present – or just a good book to read – from a famous author (not)
- 🍷 Shark Attack – Why does it happen?
- 🍷 Swimming technique myth #3: you need to look forward so you can see where you are going
- 🍷 2019 European swimming holidays
- 🍷 And our quiz, quote and pic of the month.



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- Learn-to-swim instruction, stroke correction and swimfit coaching – all levels
- Open water swimming instruction and training
- Swimming as therapy
- Swimming-based tourism – domestic and international

Date claimers over the Christmas/New Year period

With the Christmas/New Year season almost upon us, please note that our Sunday Adult Learn-To-Swim, Stroke Correction and Swimfit sessions at Murrumba Downs pool will continue as normal. None of the public holidays fall on a Sunday, so we will be there on 9th, 16th and 23rd December and return with renewed vigour and a New Year's resolution or two on 6th January and continuing every Sunday thereafter.

Mid week coaching will continue at 10am on Wednesdays at Murrumba Downs pool (note new time). Open Water Swimming will continue at 8am on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Scott's Point Beach, Margate (with the possible exception of 25th Dec), and at 8am on Saturdays at Queens Beach North, Scarborough. Please let me know if you intend to come to midweek sessions just in case there is a change of plans.

Notable swimming achievements

Age shall not weary them – two senior swimmers

Hiromu Inada, an 89 year old Japanese triathlete, completed this year's World Triathlon Championship in Kona, Hawai'i, otherwise known as the Ironman. Hiromu is the oldest person ever to finish the world championship, and he even beat his own personal record in the process. Competitors must complete the 3.86k open water swim, the 180.25k bike ride and the 42.2 (full marathon) run in less than 17 hours. Hiromu did it in 16:53:50, proving that when the mind wants something, the body can follow. And he didn't take up triathlons until he retired at age 70!



Hiromu Inada at the finish of the 2018 Ironman World Championships

John Kelso. There is another almost-nonagenarian still at it. John Kelso participates in many of Sydney's ocean swims. A retired diplomat, John is a regular on Sydney's ocean swimming circuit. The remarkable thing about him, apart from the fact that he beats most youngsters, is that he is 87 years old. John swims goggle-less, goes out in all conditions and is not fazed by stingers.



John Kelso (Photo and story courtesy of oceanswims.com)

Cameron Bellamy. Cameron is an extreme athlete. On 11th November, 36 year old Cameron began swimming a full circumnavigation of the island of Barbados, a total of 96.4 kilometres. He finished on 13th November completing his swim in 40 hours and 43 minutes. There is a Queensland connection with Cameron. While he hails from South Africa, he is a UQ graduate and he trains on the Gold Coast.



Cameron Bellamy in Barbados

Ross Edgley. On 4th November, adventurer Ross Edgley completed his epic 2,884 kilometre swim around mainland Britain. Ross swam for six hours twice a day for 157 days. He was fuelled by 15,000 calories a day and a lot of bananas. The historic swim pushed Ross to the limits of what's humanly possible and brought open water swimming to

mainstream media attention. Three hundred swimmers joined him for the final one and a half kilometres, including 57 English Channel swimmers, eight Arctic swimmers and 20 awesome skins swimmers in the 11-12 degree water.



Ross Edgley exits the water after his record-setting swim

Lynton Mortensen. Last month, Brisbane lawyer Lynton Mortensen became the first ever Australian to complete the Oceans Seven, after crossing the Cook Strait in a time of 14 hours and 14 minutes. Lynton is now the 12th person in history to complete all seven ocean swims. Even more impressively, Lynton completed all seven swims within the last two years, starting with the Strait of Gibraltar and then the English Channel. It hasn't all been smooth sailing for Australia's newest champion; he has faced adversity that would deter any normal person from the sport, having spent days in hospital after being stung by multiple box jellyfish and standing on a stone fish during his pursuit of greatness.



Lynton Mortensen (story and photo courtesy of Grimsey Swimming)

And, on the local scene, our girls 'done good'

Elle Goodall. Elle also completed the Kona Ironman this year. Elle's story of transformation is amazing. In a little over 12 months, she transformed herself from an overweight, inactive person to a world class athlete, losing 115kg in the process. Elle trains with us on Wednesdays – ok then, at least we swim in the same pool – she laughs at our attempts to keep up with her. Congratulations Elle.



Elle Goodall – before and after shots (courtesy of Ironman Official Site)

Kylie Pert. On 25th November, Kylie swam in the 2018 Redcliffe MS Swimathon to join the fight against multiple sclerosis, partly sponsored by Otter Aquatics. Kylie swam 56 50m laps in the first hour plus another 10 laps in the second 'power' 30 minutes, a total of 66 laps or 3.3k. Almost \$20,000 was raised overall. Kylie competed in her first marathon run only a couple of months ago. Congratulations Kylie.

Sonya Cossart. Also on 25th November, Sonya competed in the 1.5k OWS as part of the Brisbane Triathlon Series in a time of 19 minutes. Apparently it was part swim/part run as the tide was out. Congratulations Sonya.

How to see in the water: advice to swimmers with poor vision

If you thought foggy goggles were the biggest hindrance to making your way through the open water, take a moment to think about what it would be like swimming if you couldn't simply wipe the fog away. That's the situation for many ocean swimmers who, when they're on land, usually require prescription glasses. For swimmers with poor vision, taking on the ocean has an added challenge that the rest of us take for granted.

So what are the alternatives? The first is prescription goggles and the second is disposable contact lenses under your goggles.

Prescription swimming goggles

Positives

- No need to wear contact lenses
- A more natural feeling when swimming

Negatives

- If you lose your goggles you lose your vision
- Are more expensive than a normal pair of goggles (and cost more to replace).

Disposable contact lenses

Positives

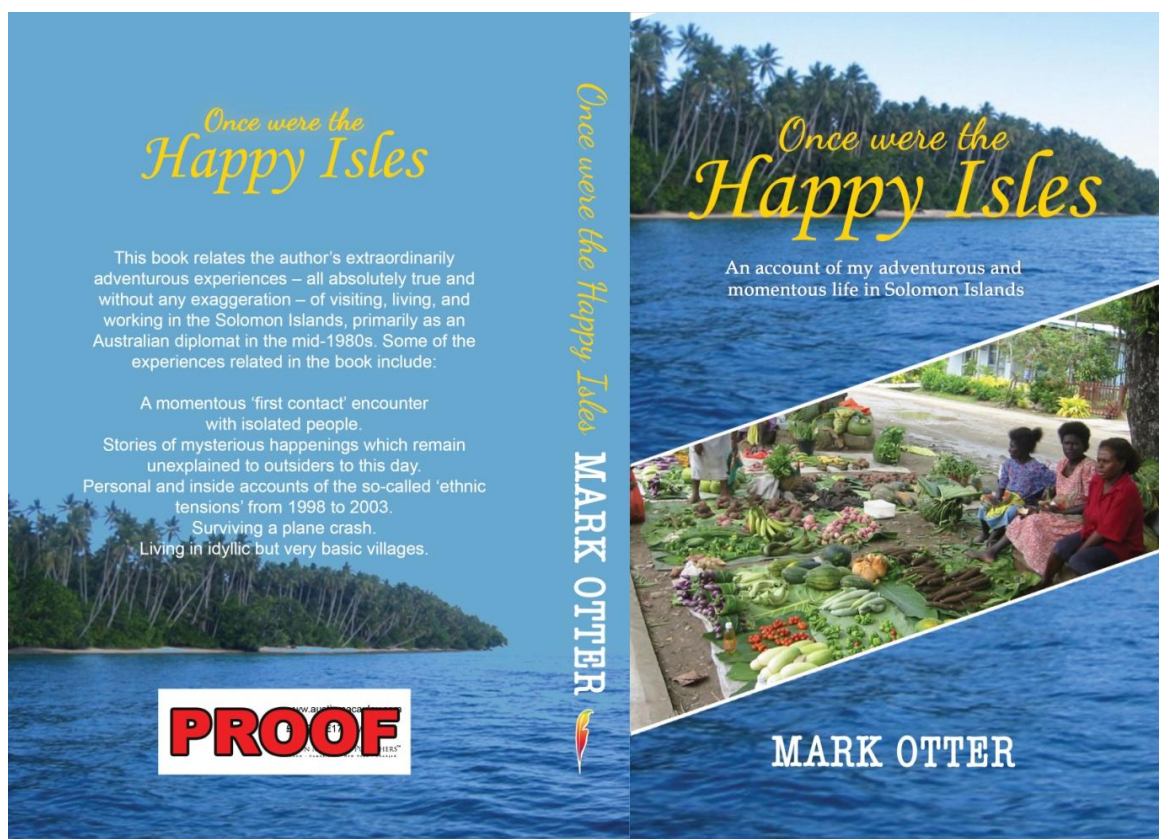
- Single-use so when affected by salt water they can be thrown out
- If you lose your goggles there's still a chance your contacts will have remained in
- If you lose your lenses they are cheap to replace
- Before and after your swim you can take your goggles off and still see well

Negatives

- Comfort while swimming
- If eyes too wet they may reduce vision
- Chance of sand getting under lenses

A book for Christmas – or just to read

If you're looking for a Christmas present – or just a good book to read – check out this one. It isn't much to do with swimming, but it certainly is adventurous. It's all about my adventures while living and working in Solomon Islands. It is available now in good bookshops and from book distributors worldwide.



Shark Attack – Why does it happen?

This is the second in our series on the subject of sharks. Over the years there have been many theories raised to try to explain the causes of shark attacks around the world. This article lists the common theories (historical and modern) as to why unprovoked shark attacks on humans occur and briefly discusses each in relation to today's knowledge of shark biology and behaviour, specifically in Australian waters.

What follows are the various shark attack theories together with responses from shark scientists. The article is préciséd from *Shark Attack Theories* by John West, Curator, Australian Shark Attack File, Taronga Zoo, Taronga Conservation Society, Australia, September 2014.

<https://taronga.org.au/conservation/conservation-science-research/australian-shark-attack-file/shark-attack-theories>.

1. **Sharks are hungry.** But they are not hungry all the time. It appears that sharks do not particularly seek out humans and they may find human flesh unpalatable. While they do bite people, they rarely eat them. There are many observations between sharks and humans where a shark shows no interest in the human or just gives a cursory look as it swims past, further supporting the research that finds they are not hungry all the time.
2. **Mistaken identity.** Mistaking humans for normal prey may be possible in some cases, especially where the water is turbid or in harbours, estuaries and rivers.
3. **Sharks are inquisitive.** Given that the only reliable way for a shark to determine if an object is palatable or not is to bite it, then this theory suggests that sharks are simply using their sensitive senses of taste, touch and smell to attempt to identify an object as something palatable. In most cases humans do not look like or act like a shark's normal prey but a shark may be attracted to an unfamiliar object because they are very inquisitive. It is thought that once a bite takes place, this is the point at which a shark determines if it continues the bite or rejects the object. Unfortunately, if this scenario is correct, the shark has already bitten the human before it realises its mistake.
4. **Sharks are attracted to human blood and urine and human electromagnetic fields.** Popular literature suggests sharks can detect a drop of blood and follow the scent to its source from kilometres away. But this is unlikely to be true as blood, urine, body odour and electromagnetic fields will quickly dilute or dissipate in the ocean. Also, there would need to be large amounts of blood flowing from the source for attraction to occur. It is more likely that the shark's selection process may be more related to the behaviour or activity of an individual rather than the scent of an individual's blood or other excretions.
5. **Sharks are attracted to bright colours.** Sharks are acutely sensitive to light, movement and contrast rather than colour. It is most likely that an object at the surface of the water viewed from below would be silhouetted and appear as a dark shape contrasted against the lighter surface of the water, irrelevant of the actual colour of the object.
6. **Sharks are defending themselves.** A shark may initiate an attack if it perceives a human as a potential predator or threat. Of the two shark-caused human fatalities in Australia in 2015, one was a provoked incident. A provoked incident occurs when a human attracts or initiates

physical contact with a shark, e.g. a person is bitten after grabbing a shark, a fisherman bitten while removing a shark from a hook, interactions with spearfishermen while spearing fish or the shark, a person steps on a shark, etc.

7. **Humans have invaded the shark's personal space.** This theory is similar to the defensive behaviour theory in that a reaction to the invasion of a shark's personal space may provoke an anti-predatory defensive response. In most cases, sharks inflict relatively minor bites or a single slashing wound, which may indicate a warning to interlopers to move away or stay away from them. Sharks are known to behave like this with other sharks and the theory may have some credence in relation to the kinds of wounds inflicted on humans, especially if they get too close.
8. **Sharks are aggressive to humans, as they are to other sharks.** There is a 'hierarchy of dominance' theory which suggests that smaller or less aggressive sharks are deterred by larger or more dominant ones. There may be some translation of this theory to the interaction between sharks and humans, but this is far from certain.
9. **Sharks are defending their territory.** While some species of shark do have a small home range (such as black tipped reef sharks), others (such as tiger sharks) have a range of several thousand kilometres. There is no conclusive evidence that any shark is territorial and defends that territory.
10. **Sharks are starving because of overfishing.** There has been speculation that because the world's fish stocks are being depleted by overfishing, sharks are starving and seek out humans as a source of food. While it is true that commercial fishing has depleted fish stocks in some areas of the ocean, most large predatory shark species, particularly those species known to bite humans, have the ability to travel long distances to other feeding grounds and do so as part of their normal distribution and migration behaviour. The diversity of food items found in sharks' stomachs would suggest that sharks have a broad range of food items to pick from. A 'starving' shark is more likely to move to where their preferred food is more available.
11. **Sharks will eat anything.** Some early authors have suggested that most sharks are opportunistic feeders but recent research shows that large predatory sharks are extremely adapted to catching their preferred prey. The variety of items found in sharks' stomachs are more likely to have been ingested as incidental to their normal feeding behaviour.
12. **Sharks only attack when the water temperature warms up.** The species of shark most commonly known to bite humans (white, tiger and bull sharks) migrate long distances north and south along the east and west coasts of Australia and are found in the same waters, and at the same time, as when most people are in the water. There is little doubt that it is the increased number of people entering the water that increases the risk of encountering a shark rather than sharks being aggressive towards people as the water warms up.
13. **Shark populations have increased.** There are three main species of shark that are associated with severe and fatal bites to humans: the white shark, the tiger shark and the bull shark. While some uncertainties exist and populations do vary in time and place, there is clear evidence of a decline in the relative abundance of all three species worldwide, including in Australia. Indeed,

the white shark is classified by the IUCN as 'vulnerable', and tiger sharks and bull sharks are classified as 'near threatened'. Plenty of sharks in the water is a sign of a healthy marine ecosystem.

Conclusion

Unprovoked shark attacks have little in common apart from the fact that a human and shark are in the water at the same location at the same time. Attacks occur under different circumstances, involve different shark species and sizes, under different environmental conditions (water quality, depth, clarity, etc), in different places at different times of the day and year and with humans behaving differently in each incident. We know that human populations are increasing and, especially in Australia, the number of people living and recreating in coastal waters is increasing. It is therefore inevitable that there be an increased risk of human-shark interaction.

Remember that shark fatalities in Australia, while tragic when they do occur, are rare. In the 120 years since such records have been kept, an average of only one fatality a year has occurred, despite the drastically increased human population, especially the number of people involved in water-based activities.

Swimming technique myth #3: you need to look forward so you can see where you are going




No you don't. For every movement of the head away from the neutral position (when you are swimming, the neutral position is looking straight down at the bottom of the pool), you add to your body's drag. In particular, if you lift your head up only a little – say to 45 degrees from the neutral position – you will be putting downwards pressure on your hips and legs, and away from the hydrodynamically efficient horizontal or flat body profile.

So how do you know when the wall is approaching? Firstly, your peripheral vision will enable you to see ahead sufficiently and, secondly, the 'T' at the end of each lane will alert you to the approaching wall. What about the open water? Someone will tap you on the shoulder and say 'you are there' – or you will crash into the rocks.

It is a slightly different matter when you need to sight occasionally to ensure you are steering a straight course in the open water. How do you do this? By lifting your head slightly – enough so that your eyes/goggles are just above the water – for as short a time and as infrequently as possible. There are many competing theories on how you should do this: some say you need to do it just before you inhale; others say just after you inhale. In my experience, it doesn't matter; do either or neither. Of course, lifting the head will send your hips and legs down but it is the lesser of two evils. Not to sight, and not to steer a straight course, will add considerable distance to your swim as you zig zag along your way.

2019 European swimming-based holidays

The early December deadline for registering your interest in any of the following August/September 2019 European swimming trips has technically passed. However, if you get in touch with me quickly, we might just be able to fit you in. The planned trips are:





-  **Italy's Lake Orta** – likely dates are late August/early September (after this, the lake is too cold)
-  **Lake Constance/Bodensee: A Three Country European Cycling and Swimming Odyssey** (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) – likely dates early/mid September
-  **Greek Islands Swimming Adventure: Rhodes and Symi**: likely dates mid/late September (before this the Med is too hot!)

For information on each trip, please go to the website <http://www.otteraquatics.com.au/swim-tours.html>. There are links there to all three trips with information relevant for 2018. Details for 2019 trips will be similar but prices will likely do as prices do – increase a little.

I have to say that, at the moment and unless I get significantly more expressions of interest, it is unlikely that European swimming trips will happen in 2019. But there will be Sydney trips twice a year, in March and November.

Quiz of the month

Last month's quiz question was 'what is the common name of the marine stinger *Physalia*? And, for a supplementary question: 'how should we treat a sting from a *Physalia*?' The answer is *Bluebottle* and the treatment is as follows:

-  Remove tentacles (that's tentacles)
-  In non-tropical waters, wash with sea water, not fresh water, do not rub
-  Apply hot water – as hot as the patient can stand – for at least 20 minutes
-  Apply cold packs for 10 minutes

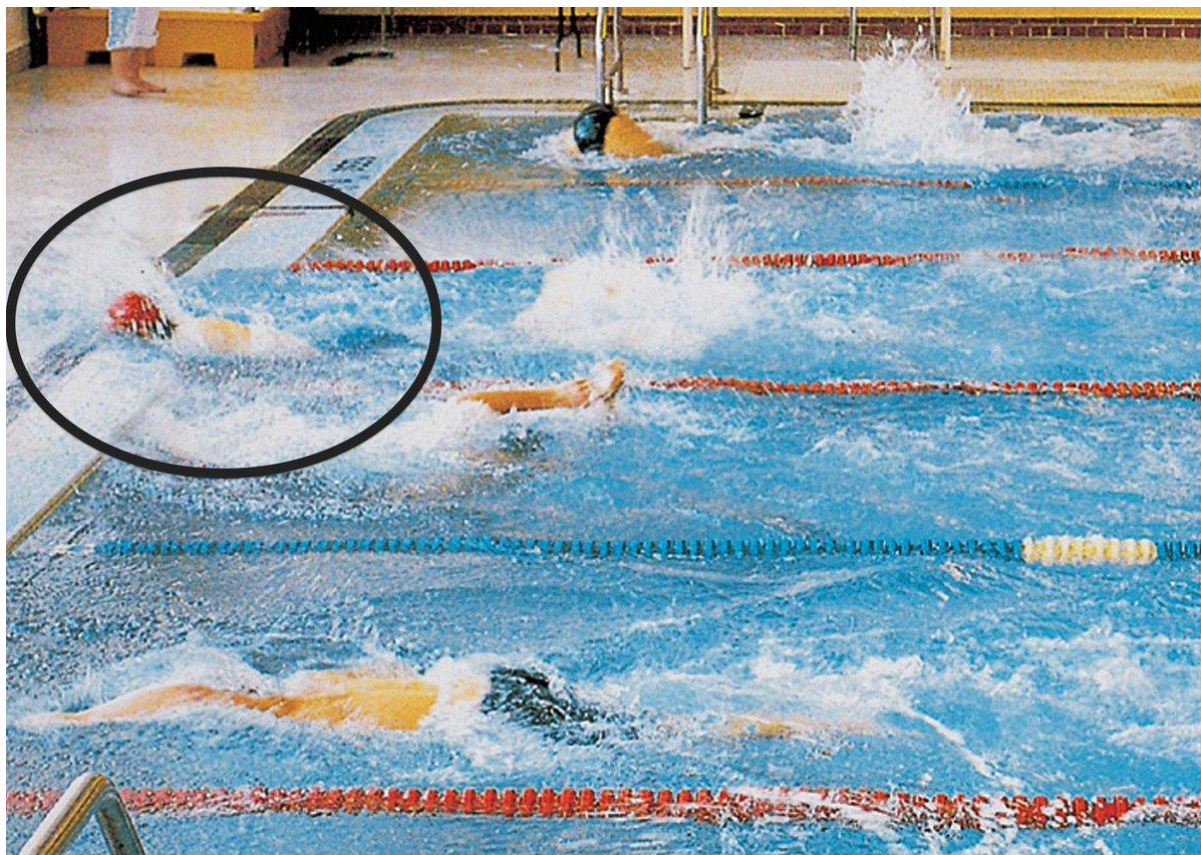
And the winner is Peter Munro, Otter Aquatics Sydney-based European swimtour supremo who is fresh from his experience in Greece where he treated such a sting by stripping off his female companion's swimsuit (or at least that is what he claims). The prize for Peter and the winners of the next two quizzes is free entry to a Grimsey Brothers' fortnightly Sunday morning open water swimming session at Sutton's Beach Redcliffe, valued at \$14, courtesy of Codie Grimsey.

This month's quiz question is 'How many bananas did Ross Edgley consume on his round-Britain epic swim?

Quote of the month

'The most important step for you to take in your life is your next'

Pic of the month



If you want to win a race, plan to finish by swimming through the wall, not stopping at it

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