

Man Caught by Whale and Lives to Tell the Tale

By: Sophie Boelk, Grade 9

A South African man by the name of Rainer Schimpf was filming several animals, including dolphins, sharks, and whales, on a 'sardine run'. This is when these animals group together to gather fish into bait balls.

Schimpf was snorkeling at the water's surface near South Africa's Port Elizabeth Harbor with two other people when he was suddenly engulfed by a 15-ton whale. He was occupied with finding the positions of the sharks in the area and making sure they were not dangerously close.

He said it suddenly got very dark, and he felt a pressure around his body. Trying not to panic, he simply held his breath and waited for the whale to spit him back out, because he would be to large for the whale to swallow.



A massive Bryde's whale, the species of whale Rainer Schimpf was caught by.

Credit: thesardinerun.info

Schimpf later commented on how the experience showed him how small people are in comparison to many other animals. He has nearly 20 years of experience as a dive tour operator, and was surprised as to how the whale seemingly came out of nowhere, since the divers tend to notice them before they begin to eat the fish they gathered.

Thankfully, Schimpf was almost immediately spit out by the whale unharmed. The incident could have been made worse if the whale went farther beneath the water again, but instead it became an interesting experience to speak about.