

The Winter of 2008

Description

Its been a winter season of mixed outcomes. The work has been interesting with. Besides the normal short shoots I have been on three big and challenging shoots.

Title: Shark Nichole

Producer: Rory McGuinness

Underwater Cameraman: Charles Maxwell

Production Company: Natural History, New Zealand

Story Line: Nichole is a white shark that was tagged in South Africa with a satellite tag and made an amazing journey from South Africa to Australia and back again, covering a total distance of 20,000 kms in only 9 months. During this period Nichole reached a maximum depth of 980 metres and endured water temperatures as low as 3.4 deg C.

Challenges: Firstly we could only work with female sharks on the wide shots. Then we needed long shots of white sharks swimming in a straight line. Not an easy task as one must use bait to bring the sharks to the camera but stop them from swimming in circles. Using my RIB, we rigged a bait on a pole with an Iconix HD polecam. Recording at 50P we could stretch the shots out on playback. This worked well but we has some nervous moments when the shark showed more interest in the RIB's inflated pontoons than in the bait.

I also used my in-house developed towcam with a Sony V1 camera purchased from Visual Impact in Cape Town. This was the easiest way to keep the sharks in frame for a longer time as no bait was required, only a shark sufficiently inquisitive to give chase.

To supplement the HD footage I shot white sharks on both a Sony F900r and a Panasonic Varicam, both from Visual Impact. My HD housing, while large is well balanced underwater but very hard work in a gyrating shark cage. To stabilise my custom built shark cage, it was lowered to mid water.



Using Our RIB to Track a White Shark



â??Nicholeâ?• Follows Towcam

Title: Earthâ??s Great Events

Producer: Hugh Pearson

Underwater Cameraman: Charles Maxwell

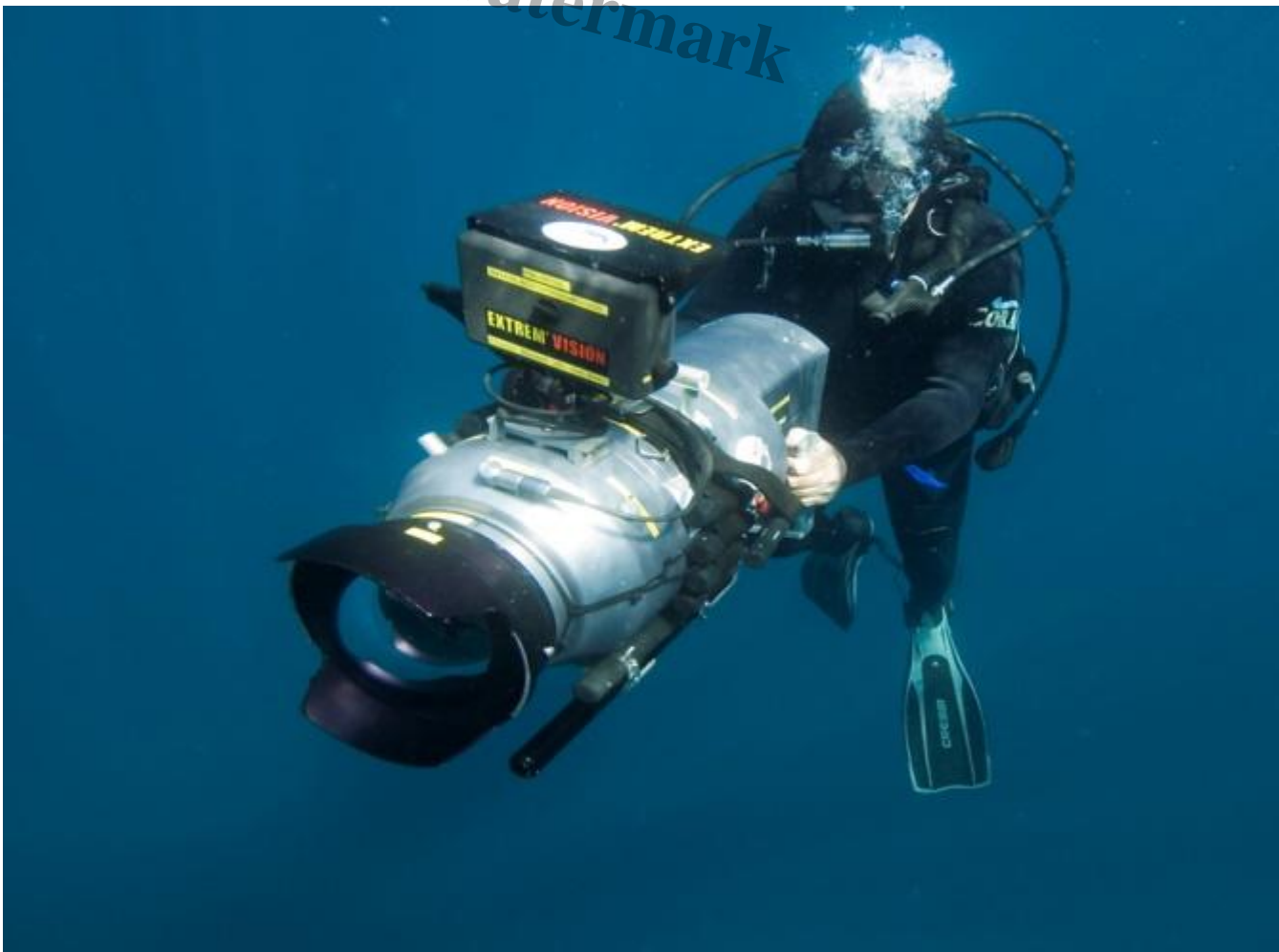
Production Company: BBC, Natural History Unit

Story Line: The Natal Sardine Run. As huge shoals of sardines move northwards along our coast during winter they are followed by a mass of predators including sharks, dolphins brydes whales, seals and gannets.

Challenges: I was to concentrate on the common dolphins, using two towcams and a side mounted camera. We operated out of East London and Port St Johns and had some great action. The water visibility was disappointing at times, making towcam work tricky but I ended up with plenty of dolphins following the towcam.



A Blacktip Shark Cruises by Overhead



Our HD900 Housing in Action



Port St Johns Looking North



Taking a Break from Chasing Sardines to Feed a Petrel

Title: Life: Mammals

Producer: Tom Clarke

Underwater Cameraman: Charles Maxwell

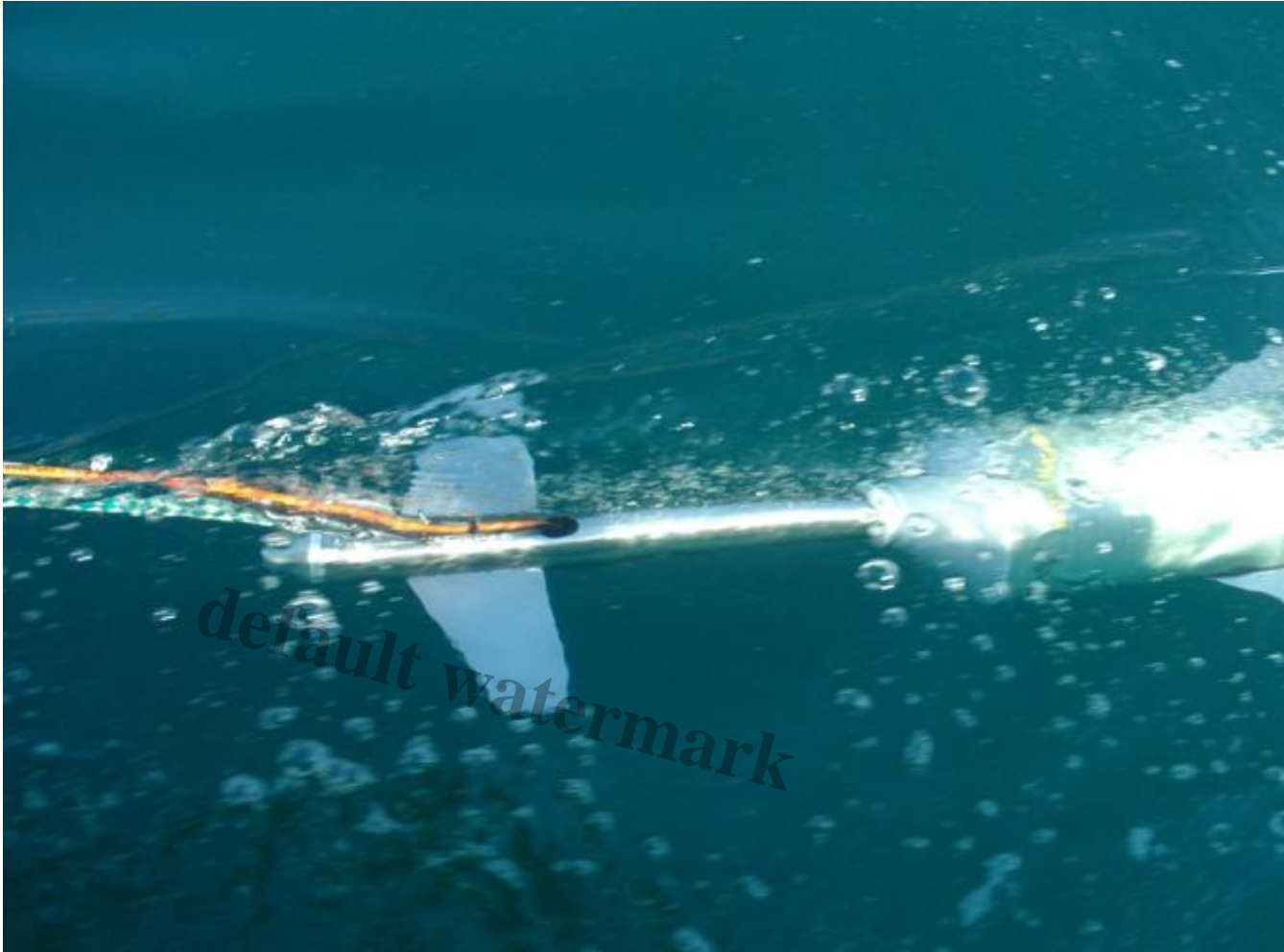
Production Company: BBC, Natural History Unit

Story Line: This segment looks at predatory interaction between cape fur seals and white sharks from the seal point of view. We were based at Seal Island in False Bay.

Challenges: Again using a towcam the 'killer shot' is to get seals chasing a white shark. I have achieved this on standard definition but now we wanted it on HD. It is not uncommon for seals to lock in behind a white shark as this is the safest place to be. Once close enough to the safety of the island, the seal will usually break away and swim to the island at top speed. During the shoot, in spite of the prevailing winds coming from the north, the underwater visibility remained poor. I picked up a white shark following the towcam on the surface monitor in the channel, swimming within a few metres of a raft of seals but the visibility was too poor to get the 'two shot'. I am presently on standby to get this shot. It will require many hours of towing. When a white shark suddenly appears on the surface monitor it can be exciting and sometimes scary when the shark charges the camera.



Rafting Seals near Seal Island, False Bay



Towcam Searching for a White Shark

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