



Red-tailed tropic bird with chick at her breast

Captain's log, September 6

0200 pos 10° 57.6'S, 136° 36.9' E, abeam Wessel Island, 2.3 mi. Entering Gulf of Carpentaria.

Getting “home” in Cairns required sixteen total days, including ten brutal days of rough head seas in the Bonaparte Gulf, Arafura Sea, and Torres Strait, going east across the top of Australia. While *Moana* was a great sea boat, the bodies inside sometimes took a beating, and this was one of those times.

We finished 2006 with one more visit to Cod Hole, Lizard Island, and Osprey Reef. It seemed the big potato cod, schools of huge jacks, and sharks were waiting to greet us once again. Personally, I have always been fascinated with sharks.

I love the beautiful, efficient shape of their bodies and, except for a few unusual situations, love to swim with them. The entire family was comfortable swimming with sharks as well, but sometimes we had guests who were a bit overwhelmed by the curious predators that like to appear from nowhere and follow you around.

At Osprey Reef, we had the only shark attack suffered in all of our travels. I witnessed the attack from the pilothouse through my binoculars, and it was a wild event! Michel's sister, Collette, and her husband, Jean-Marie, were snorkeling along the edge of the reef, above the



Gray reef shark going home

drop off and deep water of the open ocean. Suddenly, the attack began, and they were driven back into a small cave of the reef. The relentless predator would not give up and pressed the attack, forcing its terrified prey to climb up onto the reef! Fortunately, Michel was nearby in the small boat, saw the white water flying, and came to the rescue. And at close range, Michel saw exactly which type of “shark” it was: a very large remora!

Remoras are not sharks at all, but very interesting fish. They have a large, flat-shaped sucking disc on the top of their head that they use to attach themselves to large fish such as sharks, manta rays, marlin, etc., where they get a free ride with a large predator and eat scraps of food at their host’s mealtime. When a remora tries to attach onto a swimmer, which is not unusual, they come from behind. The sudden sensation of the rough sucker disc on bare skin is a shock, especially when there are already real sharks around! To make it worse, they release and re-attach as the swimmer rolls around in an attempt to discourage the “attack.” Poor Collette and Jean-Marie had to suffer not only the surprise and unnerving habit of the three-foot-long fish but the endless teasing of everyone aboard *Moana*.