

## DOES THE GREAT BARRACUDA ATTACK HUMANS WITHOUT PROVOCATION?

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Attacks on humans by the Great Barracuda are thought to be quite rare and to have obvious causes. Generally, the fish have to be provoked by attempts to spear or hook them, or are attracted to bright, shiny objects. We have made many thousands of dives around Great Barracuda without taking any precautions or suffering any attacks. EHW has speared more than 20 of these fish for parasite examinations without incident. He and LBW have closely approached many other specimens to observe the two species of large, darkly-colored, external copepods that scurry about on their bodies. TJG was snorkeling off Cozumel, Mexico, August 2004, and was attacked by a Great Barracuda without any apparent provocation. Since his recovery from this ordeal, we have become aware of many incidents of barracuda attacks, many lacking any obvious provocation. These reports are not finding their way into the scientific or even popular literature. Attacks on humans by barracuda appear to be much more common than previously thought, and unprovoked barracuda attacks apparently do occur. We are collecting, documenting, and compiling these reports for eventual publication. The Great Barracuda can attack with a speed and ferocity against which divers are rather helpless. Documenting the inadvertent/unintentional apparent causes of some of these attacks may help to prevent such incidents in the future. A number of other divers and diving organizations have been assisting by providing reports (including NOAA, a co-sponsor of this meeting). We are in the process of contacting other organizations. We have prepared a questionnaire for reporting Great Barracuda attacks. Please take some copies, bring them back to your laboratories, and help us to locate more reports. Those sending reports will be acknowledged and credited in the publication. Those organizations assisting will also be acknowledged. We greatly appreciate your help!

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