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Kona Fishing Chronicles Fishing Report

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Ray Mohammed and his daughter Lila with the 500-pound bigeye thresher shark they caught by the tail while trolling on the boat Night Runner. Photo courtesy of Reza.

2 of 2

ANOTHER STRANGE THRESHER SHARK

In last week's report we told you what we thought would be our only thresher shark story of the year. This week's Kona catch includes an even stranger thresher tale.

Reza Mohammed and his family were visiting here from Vancouver and chartered Capt. Shawn Rotella and crew Jah Nogues on Night Runner. Right there, the name of the boat might explain everything. Threshers generally feed at night when their giant eyes give them an advantage in the dark. Night Runner hooked a 450-pound thresher for Reza during the daytime. Odder yet, the fish hit a trolling lure, which makes the catch even rarer.

Indeed, the thresher had several good reasons to be confused. They started out very close to daybreak, when the thresher may not yet have decided to go back down wherever threshers go during the day. (Think vampire habits and you get the idea.) Also, Jah was washing out the fish box at the time, which sent out a stream of very nice smelling fish juices in the wake ahead of the lure. (Remember, vampire habits.) Just so you know, rinsing the fish box offshore is a more environmentally desirable habit than rinsing it in the harbor.

The strike was even more of a surprise because threshers have a very unusual way of attacking their prey. These odd-looking sharks have evolved a tail as long as their body. They can crack it like a whip and use it to stun schools of baitfish.

This thresher repeatedly tried to kill their trolling lure with its tail until it finally got hooked by the tail. As the tail flailed around out of water, it looked like the bill of a very large marlin. But it curled and furled so it then looked like something was literally "belting" the lure with a heavy strip of leather, Reza said.

The Aloha brand lure, appropriately named "Smash Bait," was already the black and purple color of a bruise, but that is beside the point.

Indeed, the point of the single hook went right through the very tough hide of the tail. As soon as it felt the pull of the line, the thresher dove straight down into the depths where it belonged. In fact, a dive very much like the kind a huge tuna makes.

Reza fought it for an hour until he was finally able to get it back up to the surface where they hoped to pull the hook out and release it. The hook could not be removed from the extremely tough hide (early Hawaiians cured the hide and used it to make drum heads), and the fish could not be resuscitated.

So the thresher went off to a charity group that may or may not use the skin but will definitely use the meat. Thresher meat is very tasty when prepared right. It draws a high price on the mainland where it is considered to be as good or better than fish like mahimahi. (And definitely far superior to the tilapia morsels that now seem to be served everywhere that people don't know anything about tilapia.)

To watch a thresher shark use its tail to whip up a dinner of fresh baitfish, check out this youtube video.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHoCCPsRuhg>

Report by Jim Rizzuto

<https://www.facebook.com/jim.rizzuto.77>