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In Mataiea as elsewhere, Yannis Garbutt remains on his guard. In the space of two days, father and son have captured 12 nohu, including several large specimens (Photo credit: Anne-Charlotte Lehartel/Yannis Garbutt).



Tahiti, October 25, 2024 – Twelve nohu caught in two days, at PK 46, in Mataiea. Unheard of for Yannis Garbutt, who shared the information on social networks to raise awareness among swimmers. In Polynesia, vigilance is required when faced with this fish with a formidable bite.

back into spearfishing with Wayne, his 10-year-old son, just across the street from their home, at PK 46, in Mataiea. But early last week, the fishing trip took an unexpected turn for the duo.

"What alerted me was when I learned that a local resident, a regular at the beach, stepped on a nohu. He had to be hospitalized. It's true that most of us go to the sea barefoot... And it's a place where there are a lot of children," confides Yannis Garbutt, who therefore decided to track the animal at a depth of just over a metre, close to the shore, without expecting to find several. *"On Monday, after school, we went fishing and we had four, two big ones and two small ones, in an hour. But the weather wasn't very good, so we lacked visibility. On Tuesday, we went back and we had eight. My son found five! I taught him how to search. I hold the rifle and we both shoot,"* says his father happily.

“Avoid accidents”

Yannis Garbutt hesitated to post on social media, but safety prevailed. His chilling photo was widely shared. *"We often go swimming there with my son, so I thought it would be good to make the spot safer. It was as simple as that, at first, but given the quantity, I thought it would be good to raise awareness. If it can prevent accidents... I think that with the abundance*

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season, they move closer to the beaches to enjoy the fry and feed."

He himself was stung in the hand a long time ago at Fare Mahora Point in Teahupo'o, and he remains especially affected by "a child stung in the foot who was screaming in pain" during a visit to the emergency room. "I wouldn't want that to happen to my son, or any other child. It's up to us to watch out for them and teach them the precautions to take," says Yannis Garbutt. Personally, he never goes into the water without his diving mask so he can see where he is putting his hands and feet.

How to react if stung?

The Marine Resources Directorate (DRM) has identified around fifteen venomous marine animals in French Polynesia. At the top of the list, the stonefish is known for its venom and its 13 dorsal spines, the danger of which is increased by its "capacity for mimicry, which allows it to blend in easily with corals and sand".

This is "the most serious sting of all those inflicted by fish". Between the intensity of the pain and the risk of necrosis and infection, it is strongly recommended to go to the emergency room. Since the toxin is heat-labile, rinsing the wound with hot (not boiling) water is one of the most common tips. A specific antivenom serum exists, but it must be injected within fifteen minutes of the sting.

"Fortunately, it's not a daily occurrence, but it does happen," says the head of the Teva i Uta rescue center, Gaston Tunoa, about nohu stings. "In conjunction with the emergency services, we immediately go to the Taravao hospital, which can be reached in 10 or 15 minutes. You shouldn't wait or try to treat yourself. It's a waste of time," warns the firefighter.

To avoid all these complications, wearing swimming shoes with reinforced soles is recommended, as are gloves and a wetsuit for divers.

Written by Anne-Charlotte Lehartel on Friday, October 25, 2024 at 4:21 p.m. | Read 13557 times



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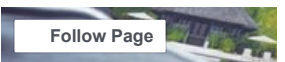
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