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WORLD NEWS

Man swallowed by hippo during African river mauling lives to tell the tale

By SASHA GOLDSTEIN
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS | MAY 04, 2013 AT 5:57 PM



River guide Paul Templer had a bad day at the office some 17 years ago when he was mauled by a hippopotamus. (paultempler via YouTube)

He was swallowed whole by a hippopotamus — and lived to tell the tale.

The hippo attack, on the Zambezi River in Zimbabwe, happened 17 years ago, but Paul Templer this week [recounted](#) the tale to The Guardian.

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"There was no transition at all, no sense of approaching danger," he recalled of the mauling. "It was as if I had suddenly gone blind and deaf."

A 27-year-old river guide at the time, Templer had a group of tourists and apprentice tour guides just a half mile from Victoria Falls when the 4,000-pound hippo attacked the kayakers.

"I was aware that my legs were surrounded by water, but my top half was almost dry," he recalled. "I seemed to be trapped in something slimy. There was a terrible, sulphurous smell, like rotten eggs, and a tremendous pressure against my chest. My arms were trapped but I managed to free one hand and felt around — my palm passed through the wiry bristles of the hippo's snout. It was only then that I realized I was underwater, trapped up to my waist in his mouth."

The animals, which kill more humans each year in Africa than any other wildlife, are capable of snapping a person in half with unbelievably strong mouths that contain "huge tusks" and "slicing incisors."

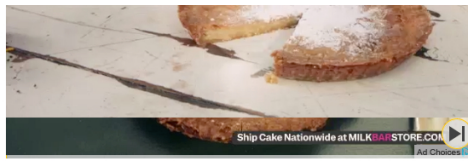
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Templer escaped his Moby Dick-like moment, but badly injured. He lost his left arm and had "a wound so savage that my lung was visible," he recalled in his first-hand account of the attack.



Hippos kill more humans than any other wildlife in Africa. (paultempler via YouTube)

"It felt as if the bull was making full use of the whole lot as he mauled me – a doctor later counted almost 40 puncture wounds and bite marks on my body," he said. "The bull simply went berserk, throwing me into the air and catching me again, shaking me like a dog with a doll."

Templer, though, counts himself lucky. One of the apprentice tour guides ended up dead, his body not found until two days after the attack.

The culprit hippo, now with a taste for human flesh, was not tracked down or killed.

The mauling couldn't even deter the river rat from taking to the water. Two years later, Templer said he led another expedition down the same stretch of river when a hippo again emerged from the depths, shocking the group.

"I screamed so loudly that those with me said they'd never heard anything like it," he said. "He dived back under and was never seen again. I'd bet my life savings it was the same hippo, determined to have the final word."

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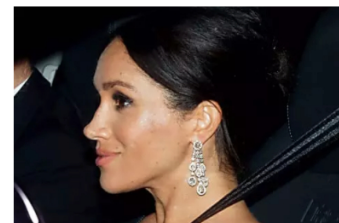
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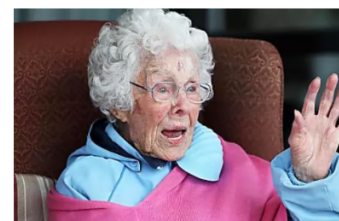
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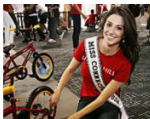


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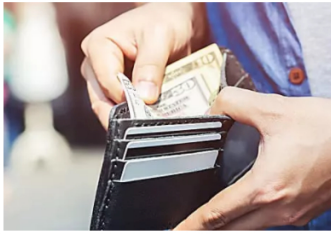


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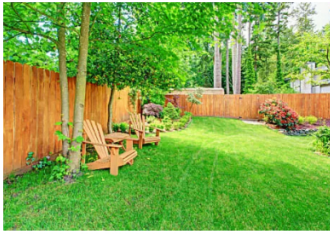
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