

Irwin's Death Draws Attention to Stingrays



The news that Steve Irwin died saddened animal lovers around the world. Better known as the host of a popular TV show, "The Crocodile Hunter," Irwin often handled dangerous animals such as giant crocodiles and snakes. It was another animal -- a stingray -- that caused Irwin's death.

Irwin was not holding the stingray when he was killed. He was simply swimming nearby. He might have frightened the stingray when he swam over it. The stingray stuck Irwin in the chest with its sharp tail.

Scientists say that it is very unusual for someone to die after being struck by a stingray. Although they do have sharp tails, stingrays are very shy, peaceful animals. You may have touched a stingray at a zoo or aquarium. Some people even go swimming with rays.

NEWS WORD BOX

stingray crocodiles
popular shallow

Stingrays can be as small as the palm of an adult's hand or up to 14 feet long and 6 feet across. When they swim, it looks like they are flying underwater as they flap their "wings." Most stingrays live in salt water, but some live in fresh water.

Stingrays do sometimes sting people. People are usually stung on the foot as they walk in shallow water. That's because people don't see a stingray hiding in the sand. If you are in water where stingrays may live, you might shuffle your feet in the sand as you walk. That will scare away any stingrays that might be nearby.

MORE ABOUT STEVE IRWIN

When Irwin was a child, his family opened a small wildlife park. Steve was catching crocodiles for the park by the time he was 9 years old. In 1991, he took over the park, which was renamed the Australia Zoo. Irwin was the zoo's director.

THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

Do you think zoos and aquariums should stop letting people swim with and pet stingrays? Why or why not?