July 2, 2015

**Danger in the Water: Shark Attacks along the NC Coastline**

Earlier this week, North Carolina saw its seventh shark attack along its coast since June 11, 2015. This is nearly double the number of shark attacks from last year, when the state recorded four instances. In the last century, North Carolina has documented a total of 55 shark attacks, 25 of which occurred just in the last decade.

Image courtesy of CNN, accessed on 7/2/15

**What’s causing these attacks?**

According to George H. Burgess, the director of the [International Shark Attack File](http://www.sharkattackfile.com) at the Florida Museum of Natural History, several factors are creating a perfect storm for shark attacks in North Carolina.

**Featured Video**

Click [here](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dr. Steve Fegley of the UNC Institute of Marine Sciences talk more about sharks in NC)

**Featured Info**

Click [here](http://www.sharkwatch.org) to view NC Sea Grant’s [Shark Sense brochure](http://www.sharkwatch.org)

**Featured IEI Initiative: Summer in the Commons**

IEI is proud to be engaging 1000+ youth this summer. [More here](http://www.ncreemergingissues.org)
Warm weather: Sharks like warm water and attacks often occur when the temperature hits 80 degrees Farenheit. This occurred early this year, bringing with it more beach-goers.

Drought: Due to the state's drought this year, less rainwater has been flowing from land to sea, making coastal waters less diluted. As a result, the water is saltier than usual and more attractive to sharks.

Bait fish: North Carolina has an abundance of small “bait fish” along the coast this summer, which are a favorite delicacy for sharks, who will often follow the fish long distances.

Avoiding a Shark Attack

“Between the months of five through nine, go swimming in the ocean from nine to five.”

-Robert Hueter, Mote Marine Laboratory, FL

Joel Fodrie, an assistant professor at UNC-Chapel Hill’s Institute of Marine Sciences in Morehead City, says that if you're in the ocean, there's a good likelihood that sharks are close by. The Institute of Marine Sciences offers some tips for avoiding a shark attack:

1. Stay out of the water in the early morning and at dusk. Sharks are often more active during transition times, when the tides are coming in, and the water closer to shore is deeper.
2. Avoid swimming near piers or any place where fishermen are baiting the water.
3. Avoid areas where you see large schools of fish, large pods of dolphins or seabirds feeding. Lots of fish can also mean lots of predators nearby.
4. Don’t wear jewelry or anything shiny. Fish scales often look shiny, and sharks may be attracted to certain textiles or accessories.
5. Swim in groups. Sharks are lazy and usually go after prey that is weak and lagging behind. If you’re in a group, you don’t appear sick or weak to a shark.
6. Don’t splash a lot. Similar to the point above, splashing a lot may make you appear to be sick or injured to a shark.
7. Don’t go in the water if you are bleeding. Those heightened shark senses will zero in on you.
8. Don’t wander too far from shore.

Surviving a Shark Attack
If you find yourself being attacked by a shark, don’t try and play dead. Your best bet is to strike the shark at its “soft” spots, including its nose, eyes, and gills, which are located on the side of its body. Once you break free, do what you can to limit your bleeding as you calmly and quickly leave the water. Blood could attract other sharks.

Quick thinking by other beach-goers is also essential. If you witness a shark attack, you can help save the victim’s life by pressing on pressure points or applying a tourniquet—even before you both leave the water. To apply a tourniquet, wrap the limb with a rope, belt, or other item at least two inches closer to the body than the wound, making sure to avoid joints. You can also help by wrapping the victim in a blanket to protect them from heat loss, avoiding unnecessary movement of the victim once out of the water, and calling for help.

**Have Fun and Stay Alert**

Despite the amount of aggressive shark behavior this summer, the probability of getting bitten is relatively low. As many of us take off for the coast to celebrate our independence this weekend, remember these tips. Be alert, stay safe and have fun!

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Sarah Langer  
Health Policy Manager  
sarah_langer@ncsu.edu  

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