

New Smyrna Beach – Be Aware of Sharks



Most years, shark bites happen off Florida's coasts more than anywhere else in the world, with Volusia County leading the way. That's often due to surfers near Ponce Inlet getting bit in the stirred up waters near New Smyrna Beach. In April 2019, a shark bit a teenager from Sanford on the calf while he waded in waist-deep water in New Smyrna Beach, according to a Volusia County Beach Safety spokesman.

Those bites aren't fatal though. According to the International Shark Attack File, for 2018, shark bites were down worldwide, with only 66 incidents recorded, down from 88 in 2017. The average over the last five years is 84 bites. Of the 66 in 2018, 32 happened in U.S. waters. Only one of the 32 was fatal, off the coast of Massachusetts, and the first fatal shark attack in the U.S. since 2015, although 2019 already has its first fatal U.S. shark attack, as a man was just killed off the coast Hawaii.

Florida was home to half of the 32 attacks with 16 overall in 2018. Volusia County once again led with four bites while Brevard had three, Nassau and St. Lucie counties with two, and one bite each in Duval, Monroe, Palm Beach, Pinellas and St. Johns counties.

Historically, the International Shark Attack File notes that since 1882, Florida has had 827 unprovoked shark attacks. Volusia County is No. 1 by far with 303 while Brevard is No. 2 with 147 and Palm Beach County in third with 76.

The file also tracks the most dangerous months with data since 1926. So in the last 92 years, more than 70 attacks a month have been from July-October with 103 of the attacks coming in September.

SHARK SAFETY TIPS

1. Always swim in a group. Sharks most often attack lone individuals.
2. Don't wander too far from shore. Doing so isolates you and places you away from assistance.
3. Avoid the water at night, dawn, or dusk. Many sharks are most active at these times and are better able to find you than you are to see them.
4. Don't enter the water if bleeding. Sharks can smell and taste blood, and trace it back to its source.
5. Don't wear shiny jewelry. The reflected light looks like shining fish scales.
6. Don't go into waters containing sewage. Sewage attracts bait fishes, which in turn attract sharks.
7. Avoid waters being fished and those with lots of bait fishes. Diving seabirds are good indicators of such activities.
8. Don't enter the water if sharks are present. Leave immediately if sharks are seen.
9. Avoid an uneven tan and brightly colored clothing. Sharks see contrast particularly well, so use extra caution when waters are cloudy.
10. Don't splash a lot. Also, keep pets out of the water. Erratic movements can attract sharks.
11. Use care near sandbars or steep drop-offs. These are favorite hangouts for sharks.
12. Don't relax just because porpoises are nearby. Sightings of porpoises do not indicate the absence of sharks. Both often eat the same foods.
13. Don't try to touch a shark if you see one.
14. If attacked by a shark, the general rule is "Do whatever it takes to get away." Some people have successfully chosen to be aggressive, others passive. Some yelled underwater, others blew bubbles.