

ACTIVITY: Body boarding

CASE: [GSAF 1995.08.07](#)

DATE: Monday August 7, 1995

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean near Ponce de Leon Inlet, Volusia County, Florida, USA.

29.1°N, 81°W

NAME: Matt Sturgis

DESCRIPTION: He is a 12-year-old male from Roachdale, Indiana.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Waxing Gibbous, 85% of the moon's visible disk was illuminated. Full Moon, August 10, 1995.

TIME: 14h10

NARRATIVE: The Sturgis family arrived on Sunday for vacation, and Matt was in the water with his seven-year-old stepsister Elizabeth when he was bitten. Matt was lying on his body board when he was bitten, but details of the incident sequence are lacking.

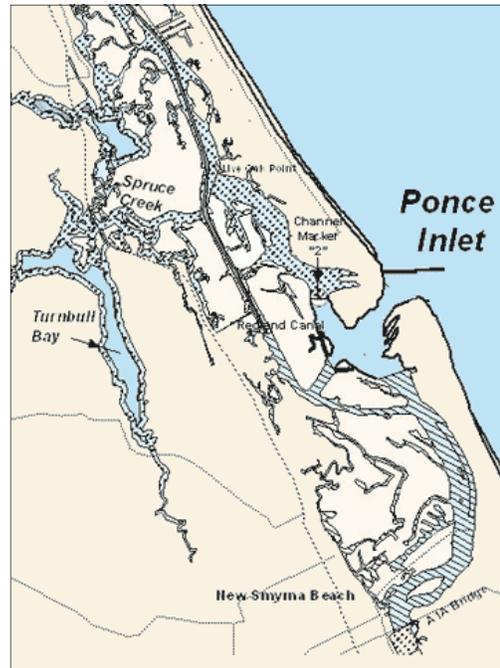
INJURY: The body boarder sustained multiple bites on the right leg and knee.

FIRST AID: First aid was administered by lifeguards Chris Hartman, Mickey Goodner and Al White.

TREATMENT: He was transported by ambulance to Bert Fish Medical Center in New Smyrna Beach. The body boarder was admitted to the hospital where Dr. Mark Harr operated on the boy's knee and immobilized it. Next day the boy was reported to be in fair condition and it was expected he would be discharged in a few days.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Not identified. The shark was thought to be four to five feet in length.

SOURCES: Orlando Sentinel, August 9, 1995, page C1; Pat LaMee, Orlando Sentinel, August 12, 1995, page D1



INDIANA BOY LATEST VICTIM OF SHARK ATTACK MATT STURGES, 12, WAS BITTEN SEVERAL TIMES MONDAY ON THE LEG AND KNEE NEAR PONCE DE LEON INLET. HE IS IN FAIR CONDITION

Two shark attacks in the past nine days off the coast of Volusia County were the result of sharks focusing on ocean splashes and snaring people by mistake, a marine expert said Tuesday.

Matt Sturges, 12, of Roachdale, Ind., remained hospitalized in fair condition Tuesday, a day after he became the latest victim.

A 4- to 5-foot shark of an unknown type bit Matt several times on the leg and knee as he was on his body board about 2:10 p.m. Monday near Ponce de Leon Inlet.

A biologist at the University of Florida suggested Tuesday the incidents were accidental.

"Sharks can't see well, especially in murky ocean water," said George Burgess, senior biologist at the Florida Museum of Natural History at the Gainesville university.

"Humans are doing provocative things - kicking and splashing - like mullet and other bait fish," Burgess said. "The white soles of surfers' and swimmers' feet look like a long fish to a young, inexperienced shark, and they react to the thrashing."

Small sharks generally attack below the knee in shallow water, and they don't pursue something larger than they are, Burgess said.

At least three people were targets on July 28 when a school of sharks encountered a group of surfers off New Smyrna Beach, lifeguards said. However, only one received stitches at the medical center for a 3- to 4-inch wound.

In Monday's attack, lifeguards Chris Hartman, Mickey Goodner and Al White assisted Matt until county ambulance crews transported him to Bert Fish Medical Center.

Dr. Mark Harr operated on the youth's right knee joint to clean it and then immobilized his leg, center spokeswoman Sheila Lowe said. More specific information on the severity of the wound wasn't available.

No shark teeth were recovered to determine the actual size of the shark, officials said.

The Sturges family had just arrived Sunday for vacation. An avid basketball player, the seventh-grader has been assured by Harr that he would be discharged from the hospital in a few days and soon be shooting baskets after recovery, officials said.

Matt told his family that he was "really scared at first" but glad his stepsister Elizabeth, 7, wasn't hurt, Lowe said.

SOURCE: Pat LaMee, Orlando Sentinel, August 9, 1995, page C1