

ACTIVITY: Fishing

CASE: GSAF 2001.07.21

DATE: Saturday July 21, 2001

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean near Chatham — Monomoy Island, off the coast of Massachusetts, USA.



Chatham - Monomoy Island

BOAT & OCCUPANTS: Joseph Fitzback, owner of Top Rod Custom Charters, and his six passengers on board a 20-foot open-cockpit charter boat out of Chatham, Massachusetts.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: New Moon, July 20, 2001

ENVIRONMENT: Due to its unique location (at the corner of Cape Cod, between the cold Atlantic and warm Nantucket Sound), the swirling waters off Monomoy are some of the most prolific fishing grounds in the Northeast. Monomoy Island was established as a National Wildlife Refuge, and is operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (a sister agency to the National Park Service and a bureau of the Department of the Interior). The 2,750 acre Refuge is accessible only by boat. It is comprised of barrier beach islands, sand dunes, freshwater ponds and marshes. Seasonally the area harbors dozens of species of migratory birds, and a large colony of harbor seals uses the shallows and beaches of the Refuge seasonally as a sanctuary.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: A mile and a quarter.

NARRATIVE: The fishing party from New Jersey had been fishing for striped bass. The last two fish were being reeled in when a black dorsal fin was spotted off the bow of the boat. "It looked like a pilot whale and it came up, shook one of the striped bass and left only the head," said Fitzback. Then the shark swam under the boat, bumping it as it headed for another striper being pulled into the stern of the charter boat. Fitzback grabbed the leader to the second line and, as he did so, the head of the shark came up against the side of the boat. "He was thrashing and banging it with his head, and slapping the side with his back. We all got drenched," said Fitzback. "It shook the boat back and forth. I had to hold a couple of people's belts so they wouldn't go overboard...water was flying inside the boat, and finally it bites through the other fish." The shark circled the boat but there were no more fish in the water, and the boat motored slowly away.

INJURY: No injury to occupants.

SPECIES INVOLVED: According to Fitzback, the incident involved a 14-foot, 700-pound shark.

SOURCE: <http://www.s-t.com/daily/07-01/07-24-01/a01sr003.htm>



Photo courtesy of Capt. Buck Berry

This 1,221-pound mako shark, a new IGFA all tackle record, was taken during the Oak Bluffs Shark tournament on July 21, 2001 off Chatham, Massachusetts.