

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: GSAF 2003.09.28

DATE: Sunday September 28, 2003

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean off the 3200 block of North State Road A1A, North Hutchinson Island, St. Lucie County, Florida, USA.

NAME: Stephen Johnson

DESCRIPTION: The surfer is a 16-year-old male from Sebastian, Florida. He is a student at Sebastian River High School and an avid skateboarder.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: New Moon, September 25, 2003

ENVIRONMENT: According to witnesses, when the teen was bitten "there were fish everywhere." His friend, 17-year-old Michael Uga of Sebastian, was fishing at the beach outside his grandmother's condominium when he heard Stephen shout that he had been bitten by a shark. People living near this stretch of beach report they see sharks swimming here all the time, and believe that the fisherman attract them. "When you got fishermen fishing here," says John Sincerbeaux who lives in Palms-West condo complex opposite the incident site, "you got trouble. They're bringing in the sharks."

DEPTH OF WATER: The incident took place "in the shallows".

TIME: 07h45

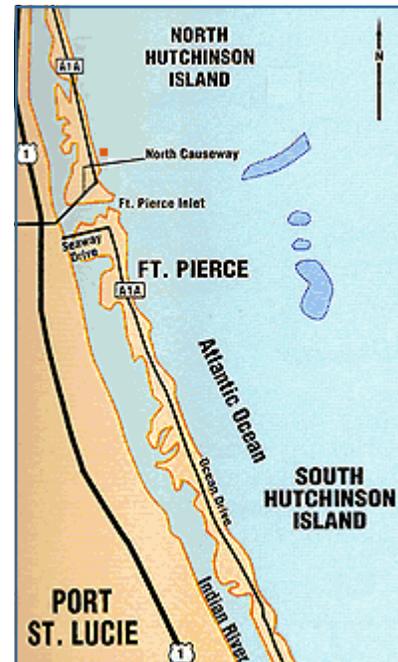
NARRATIVE: Stephen Johnson was paddling toward a wave when he saw the shark swim below him. Then the shark grabbed his left wrist, pulling him into the water. "[The shark] started tugging on my arm like he was a dog tugging on a rope," said the surfer. "I kept hitting him in the face. ... He let go, I got on my board and tried to get back to shore as fast as I could."

INJURY: Johnson sustained a laceration to his left forearm which extended from the knuckle of his index finger to four inches below the elbow.

FIRST AID: The teen walked toward the condo complex shouting for help, while a fellow Sebastian River student, Ricky Nelson, ran into the complex to call 911. Witnesses saw the injured surfer and called an ambulance.

TREATMENT: Johnson was taken to Lawnwood Regional Medical Center and Heart Institute where he underwent four hours of surgery. Dr. Ralph Rosato, chief of plastic surgery, said that he expects the surfer to recover fully after five to six months of rehabilitation, and suffer no long-term effects from the bite.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Not identified. Dr. Rosato reported the wound indicated the shark had a bite radius up to 13 inches.



SOURCES: 7 News Online; Fort Pierce Tribune, September 30, 2003;

Vero Beach Press Journal and Stuart News, October 1, 2003 editions.

