

ACTIVITY: Boogie boarding

CASE: [GSAF 2006.06.27](#)

DATE: Tuesday June 27, 2006

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean on a stretch of beach behind Ocean Village Condos on Ocean Drive at South Hutchinson Island, St. Lucie County, Florida, USA.

27.5°N, 80.3°W

NAME: Juliette Shipp

DESCRIPTION: She is a nine-year-old female from Harleysville, Pennsylvania.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was clear in the early morning and there were only scattered clouds at the time of the incident. At 10h53 the meteorological office on Hutchinson island recorded air temperature of 86°F [30°C], dew point was 73.9°F [23.3°C], humidity was 67%; sea level pressure was 30.06 inches [1017.7 hPa], visibility was 10 miles [16.1 kilometers], and the wind direction was South at 13.8 mph [22.2 km/h]. At 11h53, the air temperature was 87.1°F [30.6°C], dew point was 71.1°F [21.7°C], humidity was 59%; sea level pressure was 30.07 inches [1018.1 hPa] and the wind direction was West-South-West at 8.1 mph [13 km/h]. Later in the same around 19h00 [7 pm] there was a brief thunderstorm, lasting about an hour, followed by light rain until about 23h00 [11 pm].

MOON PHASE: Waxing crescent with 4% of the Moon's visible disk was illuminated.

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea temperature was 84°F [28.9°C] and the water was still and clear.

ENVIRONMENT: A sheriff's office helicopter and patrol boat combed the shoreline after the incident and a red flag was posted at the entrance to the beach. The beach has no lifeguard and only a small group of people were out by the water when it happened. Several residents said they have spotted more sharks in the water lately, including Marie Chase, who said she sees them from her 12th floor condo at Ocean Village. "They're always out there," she said. "You can see sharks in the morning clear as day."

Juliette's grandmother, Marleen Sherwin said she heard there were fishermen with lines out for sharks just south of where the incident occurred and she said she worries there might have been a connection between fishing activity and what happened. She said she plans to push for further separation between fishing areas and swim areas. Two young men were fishing at the site in the early afternoon, but said they didn't arrive until after the incident. They had one line dedicated to catching a shark, they said.

Dr. Tracey Sutton, a marine scientist at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution, said, "It was probably a small shark that may have mistaken her leg for a mullet. It's peak feeding



Juliette Shipp

time here because most bait fish are here in the summertime. Sharks follow the bait fish.” The Indian River Lagoon is a prime spot for spawning sharks — including blacktip sharks and spinner sharks — in the spring, Sutton said. Through the summer, young sharks stay in the area hunting the schools of bait fish that tend to hang out in the surf zone. Sometimes, young sharks get caught at low tide between the beach and sandbars. “It is highly unusual for someone to get bitten,” Sutton said. “(But) if you see bait fish in the water, you want to be extra careful.”

DEPTH OF WATER: Two to three feet

TIME: 11h10

NARRATIVE: Juliette Shipp, who was visiting her grandmother, was playing (standing) in the breakers with a boogie board. Her mother, Leslie Shipp, was floating on a raft in deeper water 15 to 20 feet from shore when she heard Juliette cry out. Initially, she thought a crab might have bitten her, then she saw the wound and the blood and realized the injury was serious, “She lifted her leg up and I could see the huge cut,” she said.

Juliette said she saw “something gray” in the water just before it bit the calf of her right leg just below the knee. She really didn't have any time to react,” said the girl's mother.

INJURY: The girl sustained a two-inch laceration to her upper right calf, and two longer, deeper lacerations on the lower calf.

FIRST AID: Leslie tried to pull her daughter out of the water, but found she was surprisingly heavy and their movements were slower than expected. A man she didn't know helped pick up her daughter, and the two of them used beach towels to apply direct pressure to the injury. The man called 911 on his cell phone, and Leslie was able to get her daughter to the nearby recreation center where St. Lucie County paramedics provided first aid before transporting the girl to the hospital.

TREATMENT: The girl was admitted to Lawnwood Regional Medical Center & Heart Institute at 1700 South 23rd Street, Fort Pierce, FL 34960. She was discharged next day with a cast on her leg and numerous stitches, but expected to make a full recovery.

SPECIES: Not identified

SOURCES: Derek Simmons, June 28 & 30, 2006, TCPalm.com, http://www1.tcpalm.com/tcp/local_news/article/0,2545,TCP_16736_4804962,00.html et al



Juliette and her mother, Leslie Shipp



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