



ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: [GSAF 2015.08.29.a](#)

DATE: Saturday August 29, 2015

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean at Morro Rock in Morro Bay, San Luis Obispo County, California, USA.

35°22'10"N, 120°52'03"W

NAME: Daniel Phillips

DESCRIPTION: A 21-year-old male. He is 5'6", weighs 140 lbs and he was wearing a black full-hooded wetsuit.

SURFBOARD: A nine-foot red longboard.



Wikipedia

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was clear and the air temperature was 75° to 78°F, estimated. Earlier in the morning (09h00) it was very foggy and visibility in the water was very poor.

MOON PHASE: Full Moon

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was calm and underwater visibility was 20 to 30 feet.

ENVIRONMENT: The incident took place over a sandy bottom. After the morning fog broke, the surfers saw a long line of fishing vessels out near the kelp forest. A large variety of fishes were being fed upon by sea gulls, pelicans, cormorants, and Peregrine Falcons. Marine mammals observed were three Harbor Seals, two California Sea Lions, and one Sea Otter. Surfers noticed that all of the marine mammals left the area 10 to 15 minutes prior to the incident. They also observed an injured or sickly cormorant earlier in their session that they were unable to locate five to 10 minutes before the incident.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 150 yards

DEPTH OF WATER: 15 to 20 feet.

TIME: 10h00

NARRATIVE: Daniel Phillips was surfing with Roston Johnson. Phillips recalled:

"I was 30 feet outside the line up sitting on top of a sand bar where occasionally big waves would break every 15 or so minutes. I was the furthest out with the nearest surfer approximately 20 feet towards the beach from my position. He and about nine other surfers observed the shark during my encounter. I feel that it is necessary to note that my hand was bleeding from a minor injury. I did not see the shark before it struck me the first time on the right-hand side of my board at an upward angle and at

a speed of 15 to 20 mph. It moved me 90 degrees to the left and I saw its entire body, including the black eyes, massive dorsal fin, and finally the entire mass of its body. The second time it struck my leg at the top of my calf near my knee cap at a speed of 15 to 20 mph after turning around and swimming to a distance adequate to build up its speed to knock me from my board. However the second time the shark rolled its eyes but did not open its mouth when it hit me on the left side. It folded my leg under the board and moved me another 90 degrees to the left as it passed beneath me hitting my leg with its fins. It was at this point that I popped up on my knees and began to paddle for shore, as the shark had repositioned me so that I was facing directly towards the beach.

“I looked back and saw the shark swim around in an arching pattern as it followed another surfer with a red long board that had also began to head toward shore. The shark turned and swam under another surfer with a blue long board that was also paddling in to the beach. As the shark passed the second surfer the shark turned toward me a third time and increased its speed to 20 to 25 mph. This time not only did it roll its eyes but it opened its mouth as it headed towards me. Luckily it passed beneath me and I just barely made it past the shark before it broke the surface of the water behind me. I just continued to paddle until I was paddling into the sand. Several surfers, including Roston asked if I was OK when we had all reached the safety of the beach. I was a little traumatized but thankfully no permanent injury.”

After Phillips reached the beach he realized his father was still surfing so he paddled back out to warn him. Knowing what was in the water, he said it “was a very nerve racking paddle!”

INJURY: No injury

SPECIES: The incident involved a white shark 10 to 12 feet in length. The surfers said the shark was three to four feet in width with a gray dorsal surface and white ventral surface.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Ralph Collier, GSAF