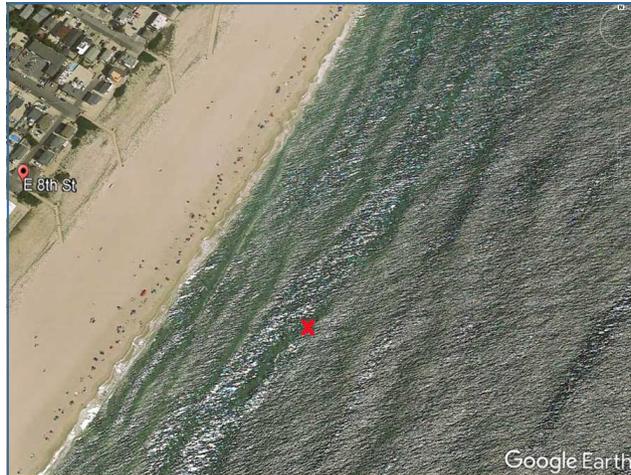


ACTIVITY: Body boarding

CASE: [GSAF 2019.05.20](#)

DATE: Monday May 20, 2019

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean off Eighth Avenue at Ship Bottom on Long Beach Island, Ocean County, New Jersey, USA.



NAME: Paul Sykes

DESCRIPTION: A 67-year-old male from Ocean County, New Jersey. He is 5'10" tall and weighs 160 lbs. "I am an experienced waterman, having been an Atlantic City lifeguard and a surfer/bodyboarder my entire life. I've seen many dolphin, some sharks, and a few whales (one, just 2 weeks ago while out at the same beach) fairly close to me, but have never had a physical encounter," he reports.

BODY BOARD: White underside, blue top and rails, and 42 inches in length.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The air temperature was 62°F, dew point 52°F, humidity 81%, sea level pressure 29.98 inches. The wind direction was South at 15 mph (est) which accounted for the choppy ocean surface and disorganized waves.

MOON PHASE: Waning Gibbous. Full Moon, May 18, 2019. Third Quarter, May 26, 2019.

SEA CONDITIONS: Mean high tide at Ship Bottom occurred at 09h14, mean low tide at 15h32.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 80 to 100 yards

DEPTH OF WATER: Seven to eight feet

TIME: Between 12h00 and 12h15

NARRATIVE: Paul Sykes was alone in the water on the outer edge of the sandbar where three foot (est.) waves were breaking in a disorganized, wind-chop manner. As he finished paddling out after catching a wave he was resting on his body board with his lower body, legs, and swim fins in the water and his chest and arms resting on the board.

"I was hit on my left side, around the hip area, right at the water line. I was knocked off the board and about 3 feet across the water. I went under for just a second and came up and saw a fin next to my board, approximately 12 inches high in the white foam. I pulled my board to me on the attached leash, got on the board and began paddling for shore. I did not see a fish body or the fin again."

INJURY: "I was not bitten and my wetsuit was not ripped," he reports. "I was not injured other than today having what feels like a whiplash in my left-side neck."

SPECIES: Not identified but it is likely that a shark, rather than a dolphin or other large fish, was involved. Large pods of dolphins were spotted about four miles offshore earlier this month, however, there have been reports of white sharks along the New Jersey, New York and Connecticut coast for the past week, and ramming an object at the surface with force is a strategy used by the species. There are also several other large shark species often found close inshore that could have been involved in this incident.

SOURCE: Paul Sykes