

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: **GSF 2004.05.28**

DATE: Friday May 28, 2004

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean at North Salmon Creek Beach, Sonoma County, California, USA.

NAME: Bernard Connor Jr.

DESCRIPTION: The surfer, a 44-year-old white male, is 5'10" tall and weighs 182 lbs. He was clad in a black full wetsuit, hood and booties.

SURFBOARD: Connor was using a blue 6'10" surfboard.



North Salmon Creek Beach

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a windy day; air temperature was 61°F.

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, June 2, 2004

SEA CONDITIONS: The water temperature was 53° to 54°F. The sea was calm with a gentle 3.3-foot west-southwest swell. The water was murky; estimated visibility was less than six feet.

ENVIRONMENT: Kelp beds were in the area, as well as marine animals, but neither were in the immediate area of the incident.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 100 yards

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: Approximately 10 ft (1.5 fathoms)

TIME: 11h00

NARRATIVE: Connor had been in the water for 40 minutes. "I had moved north from a pack of about 12 surfers and was waiting for a wave," he said. "I saw a wave coming my way and was turning to lay down and paddle when I heard a noise behind me, turned to glance behind me. I saw a dorsal about 14 inches or more out of the water and about four to five feet away from me. I looked down and saw the body [of the shark] from the pectoral in the back. It was massive."

"The shark swam in an arc and turned back toward me, passing along my left leg. As it went by, the shark's head must have hit my leg because I could still see its pectoral fin coming at me, and I started to fall to my left. As I tried to recover and stay on my board, I over-corrected and fell over on the right side of my board."

"As soon as I hit the water, the shark started thrashing its body back and forth, turning the water into a boiling whirlpool. I pulled my board in front of me and tried to keep it between me and the shark (the entire time, the shark was circling me, remaining three to four feet away. As the shark completed its second circle, it came straight at me. This time I was in the water and turned the pointed nose of the board towards the shark. As it came closer, I jabbed the point of the board at the shark, and poked in about the shoulder area. The shark veered off to my left and started thrashing its body violently (I think I pissed [the shark] off a bit) while I crawled back onto my board."

"When the shark stopped thrashing, I started to paddle, thinking I could get away. Big mistake. The paddling seemed to make the shark very agitated and it began thrashing its

INJURY: The surfer was bumped but he sustained no injury.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The incident involved a white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*, at least 12 feet in length. The surfer estimates that the distance from the pectoral fins to the tip of the tail was about 10 feet. He believes the pectoral fins were approximately two feet in length and the first dorsal fin was 14" or greater in height.

NOTE: The Sonoma County Sheriff Department's helicopter *Henry-One* flew three miles north and south of the area but didn't see any sign of the shark. The beach remains open, but signs informing people of the incident have been posted at the beach and people are being advised to enter the water at their own risk.

SOURCE: Interview with Butch Connor, Jr.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Ralph S. Collier, GSAF