

**ACTIVITY:** Swimming

**CASE:** [GSAF 2012.06.22.a](#)

**DATE:** Friday June 22, 2012

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean at Bathtub Reef Beach, Martin County, Florida, USA.

**NAME:** Patrick McInerney

**DESCRIPTION:** He is a 12-year-old male from Annapolis, Maryland. He is 4'11" and weighs 95 lbs. He was wearing a white long-sleeved rash guard, small black design upper chest, blue and white Hawaiian print bathing suit, and goggles. He wore no jewelry and had no injuries prior to entering the sea.



*Bathtub Reef Beach*

### **BACKGROUND**

**WEATHER:** At 16h35, Stuart recorded clear skies and 10 mile visibility. The air temperature was 77°F, dew point 71.6°F, humidity 83%, sea level pressure 29.87 inches and there was no wind. At Bathtub Reef Beach, the sky was partly cloudy and air temperature was about 88°F.

**MOON PHASE:** Waxing Crescent, 9% of the Moon was illuminated. New Moon, June 19, 2012.

**SEA CONDITIONS:** The water was blue, clear and calm. The sea surface temperature was 85°F, estimated. No channel was present and the accident took place at low tide.

**ENVIRONMENT:** Bathtub Reef Park is located at the south end of Hutchinson Island, near Stuart Florida. It features a reef created by Sabellariid or "Honeycomb" worms. The reef rocks look somewhat like honeycomb and are created by the tubeworms in a process that involves cementing together sand and bits of shell. Shortly before Patrick was bitten he observed a school of small fish.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** Approximately 180 feet

**DISTANCE FROM REEF:** 10 feet

**DEPTH OF WATER:** Knee- to thigh-deep (knee-deep over the rocks alternating with thigh-deep over the sand.)

**TIME:** 16h40

**NARRATIVE:** Patrick was swimming towards the reef with his brother, Danny. Danny had reached the rocks at the start of the reef, but Patrick, who was five feet behind him, was over a sandy bottom. Patrick was swimming a gentle breast stroke at surface while, surveying the bottom for fish. He had been in the water for 30 minutes and was facing seawards.

The shark approached Patrick from behind, and struck a fleeting blow. Patrick described as a punch harder than he had ever been hit before. He felt almost as if it turned him around. He didn't feel the bite or any pain at the time, but instinctively knew he was bitten. He ran out of the water screaming "I was bit." His brother, Danny, who was five to 10 feet away, was just turning to look at Patrick when he saw a lot of splashing right next to him and heard a thump. Danny described it as a noise he might hear when doing a very hard butterfly kick. Lifeguards ordered people out of the water and the beach remained closed

until Saturday morning.

**INJURY:** The patient sustained an arc of lacerations and puncture marks to his left lateral leg, running from his lower thigh to below his knee. No tissue was lost.

**FIRST AID:** The patient immediately put pressure on his injury with a towel until his mother, who is a physician, arrived at his side. Although the lifeguards didn't witness it (the patient was out of their view, behind the boardwalk/nature center) they arrived on scene quickly.

**TREATMENT:** The patient was transported by ambulance to North Martin County Hospital in Stuart, Florida, arriving there 30 minutes after he was bitten. At the hospital, the injury was treated by Dr. Janice Krabbe (ER physician). No tooth fragments were recovered.

**SPECIES:** The shark was not seen before or after the strike.

**SOURCES:** Ellen R. McInerney, M.D. (Patrick's mother);  
WPTV.com, June 22, 2012,  
[http://www.wptv.com/dpp/news/region\\_martin\\_county/stuart/shark-bite-suspected-at-stuarts-bathtub-reef-beach](http://www.wptv.com/dpp/news/region_martin_county/stuart/shark-bite-suspected-at-stuarts-bathtub-reef-beach)

**COMMENTS** *by Dr. Hubbell*

1. It is difficult to make any educated deductions as to the species of shark involved without any measurements of the width of the bite wound or the space between the tooth marks .
2. It is unusual that only half of the teeth of the upper or lower jaw were used in the attack.
3. My guess is that the accident involve a blacktip shark about 4'6" in total length, but it is possible the bite may be from a lemon shark.
4. From the force of the attack, the clarity of the water and the fact that only one row of teeth (probably the first row of teeth of the lower jaw) was used, I would guess that it was more of a territorial defense than a mistaken identity. I don't think that this shark was searching for food.