



ACTIVITY: Body boarding

CASE: [GSAF 2013.11.07.b](#)

DATE: Thursday November 7, 2013

LOCATION: The incident took place on the south side of the Mount Street Jetty in Bay Head, Ocean County, New Jersey, USA.

NAME: Quinn Gates

DESCRIPTION: He is a 16-year-old male. He was wearing a light blue silicone swim fin on his right foot, and a black one on his left foot.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Waxing Crescent, 22% of the Moon was illuminated. First Quarter, November 10, 2013.

TIME: Afternoon

NARRATIVE: Gates was body boarding with a friend when he felt a tug on his right foot and discovered a large chunk was taken out of this swim fin.

INJURY: The body boarder was not injured.

SPECIES: Gates did not see the shark, but the damage to the fin suggests it was bitten by a shark, six to eight feet in length.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Captain Steve Nagiewicz, Shark Research Institute



Quinn Gates

Courtesy: Gates Family



Paul Mulshine/The Star-Ledger

Shark bite suspected in Ocean County after teen surfer has chunk taken from swim fin

Quinn Gates felt a tug on his foot, then noticed a large chunk was taken out of his silicone swim fin -- in what was believed to be a shark bite in Bay Head on Thursday afternoon.

Bodyboard surfer Quinn Gates felt a tug on his foot. When he looked down, a large chunk was taken out of his swim fin in Bay Head on Thursday afternoon, in what was believed to be a shark bite. The fin he wore on his right foot was mangled, but Gates, 16, was otherwise unharmed. "It could have gotten my toes or feet," the relieved teenager said Friday.

A New Jersey shark expert who reviewed a photo of the light blue silicone swim fin said it's possible a 6- to 8-foot shark could have chomped on it, mistaking it for a seal or fish. Gates also had a black fin on his left foot.

"New Jersey is one of the better places for sharks to find prey," said Capt. Stephen D. Nagiewicz, chairman of the board of trustees of the Shark Research Institute. "We have abundant food — massive schools of bluefish and tuna." New Jersey's ocean water has a greenish and brownish hue — not because it is polluted, but because it is teeming with microorganisms such as algae and plankton, he said. That brings the schools of fish, and the schools of fish bring the sharks: whites, makos, tigers, bulls, sand tigers, dogfish and the occasional blue. "They have a pretty good bite strength — good enough to bite through the side of a boat if they want," said Nagiewicz, who has encountered numerous sharks in his nearly 30 years of diving in the Atlantic Ocean. "Fortunately, he got his fin instead of the leg."

Gates was bodyboarding with a friend on the south side of the Mount Street jetty in Bay Head, Ocean County Thursday afternoon. From the other side of the jetty, body surfer George Nicholas, a geologist, noticed the tight waves that propelled the two bodyboard surfers. "They were getting some good rides — we were watching them for a while," Nicholas said.

Turns out the ride was a little more exciting than they bargained for. "I felt a tug on my fin," Gates said. "It was hanging off." Gates, who quickly got out of the water, said he saw tiger sharks in the same area about a month ago.

On Thursday afternoon, Nicholas noticed an unusual ripple in the water. He didn't put two-and-two together until later, when he heard about the shark bite from Gates' family. Gates' grandmother brought the half-eaten fin to the home of Nicholas and his wife, Beth. Ironically, Beth Nicholas is the cousin of famed surfer Bethany Hamilton, whose arm was chewed off by a shark in Hawaii. "It's pretty amazing that it missed his toes," George Nicholas said.

"It's great that it happened in the offseason, when there weren't a lot of bathers in the water," Nagiewicz said. He said he hopes people who swim in the ocean won't be afraid of sharks, but are aware of their presence.

Gates, whose Facebook page is filled with photos of waves and surfing scenes, will not be deterred from the water. "I will just pay attention more," he said.

SOURCE: Mike Frassinelli, Star Ledger, November 9, 2013, http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2013/11/shark_bite_suspected_in_ocean_county_after_teen_surfer_has_chunk_taken_from_swim_fin.html