

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: GSAF 2014.08.08

DATE: Friday August 8, 2014

LOCATION: The incident took place in Lake Pontchartrain off Southshore Harbor, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA.

NAME: Trent Trentacosta

DESCRIPTION: He is a seven-year-old male from Lakeview.



BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a calm day.

MOON PHASE: Waxing Gibbous, 94% of the Moon was illuminated. Full Moon, August 10, 2014.

WATER CONDITIONS: The water was clear and cool.

ENVIRONMENT: Lake Pontchartrain is not a lake; it is an estuary that receives fresh water from five different rivers (none of which are the Mississippi). This huge body of brackish water covers roughly 630 square miles and is connected to the Rigolets strait and Chef Menteur Pass to Lake Borgne, which opens into the Gulf of Mexico north of New Orleans. Lake Pontchartrain experiences tides and salinity of up to 50 percent in its easternmost reaches (although almost none in its westernmost).

TIME: Afternoon

NARRATIVE: Shelly Trentacosta and her family had borrowed a friend's sailboat and ventured out into the lake, but it was a better day for swimming than sailing, so the boaters decided to anchor up and take a dip.

"The kids were bunched up together playing, and Trent just started screaming," said Trent's mother, Shelly. "We started swimming to him, and I didn't know what was going on. I grabbed his leg, and there was a lot of blood." She towed her son back to the sailboat to get a better look, but his foot bloody. Her first thought, she said, was that he had stepped on a stingray, then thought he scraped his foot against a barnacle-covered log, and rushed back to the harbor to get him medical care.

FIRST AID / TREATMENT: His mother drove with Trent to the nearest urgent care. There, doctors were able to clean the foot, and told her that her son had been bitten by a shark. No stitches were required. Trent is recovering from the bite, and his mother said he won't have any permanent injuries.

INJURY: The boy sustained minor lacerations to his left heel and his big toe.

SPECIES: The incident is unusual for Lake Pontchartrain, where shark bites are so rare that many who frequent its waters are unaware the lake hosts a seasonal population of bull sharks. According to Martin O'Connell, who directs a research laboratory at the Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Sciences at the University of New Orleans, bull sharks as long as six feet congregate in the lake between April and November.

Mitchell Chevalier, who tags sharks for the University of New Orleans and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, said the females that move into the lake to give birth are between seven and eight feet in length. "Generally, your big female bull sharks aren't in the lake right now. They've already moved in, pupped out and left. Now granted, there are still six-footers in the lake, but I'm speechless that one might have bitten somebody." After viewing photos of Trent's foot, however, Chevalier said there was no longer any question. "Without a doubt, it's a bull shark -- probably around five feet [in length]," he said.

SOURCE: NOLA.com, The Times-Picayune, August 9, 2014
http://www.nola.com/outdoors/index.ssf/2014/08/shark_attacks_lakeview_boy_swi.html