

Study: Shark attacks declining

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University of Florida scientists say shark attacks worldwide were lower in number last year, continuing a five-year downturn.

The researchers say greater safety precautions and "in-your-face" responses to confrontations with sharks went a long way in reducing the total number of attacks from 65 during 2004 to 58 in 2005 and fatalities from seven to four, said George Burgess, director of the International Shark Attack File housed at UF's Florida Museum of Natural History.

In contrast, there were 78 shark attacks -- 11 of them fatal -- during 2000, the all-time high record year for attacks since statistics have been kept.

Despite the worldwide decline, the number of attacks in the United

States rose slightly, from 30 in 2004 to 38 last year. But that is still much lower than the recorded high of 52 in 2000.

In addition to last year's 38 U.S. attacks, Burgess tracked 10 in Australia, four in South Africa and one each in the Bahamas, St. Martin, Mexico, Fiji, Vanuatu and South Korea.

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