

Sharks popping up all around Florida for summer beach season

May 30 2019, by Richard Tribou



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There are sharks off Florida's coast. That's not news, but with Memorial Day weekend's traditional summer season kickoff, there are now thousands more people venturing to Florida's beaches, so that means

more shark sightings.

That's still no excuse to not heed warnings, which are what lifeguards posted when a [hammerhead shark](#) hung around Nokomis Beach near Venice off Florida's Gulf Coast on Tuesday.

The 8- to 12-foot shark kept swimmers out of the [water](#) for more than an hour, according to a story on WFTS.

About 100 miles north, another hammerhead shark was the star of a video put on the Pasco County Sheriff's Office Facebook page.

Meanwhile, the nonprofit OCEARCH that tags [sharks](#) and tracks them on its website shows many of its nicknamed [great white sharks](#) spending time off Florida's [coast](#).

As of May 29, 10-foot, 2-inch Miss May is off the coast of Daytona Beach, 12-foot, 9-inch Caroline is off the Florida Keys, 12-foot, 5-inch Miss Costa is in the Florida Straits between the Keys and Cuba and 5-foot, 1-inch Hudson is in the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Naples. The group also tracks other species and there are several tracked tiger sharks and bull sharks in Florida's waters as well.

Most years, shark bites happen off Florida's coasts more than anywhere else in the world, with Volusia County leading the way. That's often due to surfers near Ponce Inlet getting bit in the stirred up waters near New Smyrna Beach. In April, a shark bit a teenager from Sanford on the calf while he waded in waist-deep water in New Smyrna Beach, according to a Volusia County Beach Safety spokesman.

Those bites aren't fatal though. According to the International Shark Attack File, for 2018, [shark bites](#) were down worldwide, with only 66 incidents recorded, down from 88 in 2017. The average over the last five

years is 84 bites. Of the 66 in 2018, 32 happened in U.S. waters. Only one of the 32 was fatal, off the coast of Massachusetts, and the first fatal shark attack in the U.S. since 2015, although 2019 already has its first fatal U.S. shark attack, as a man was just killed off the coast Hawaii.

Florida was home to half of the 32 attacks with 16 overall in 2018. Volusia County once again led with four bites while Brevard had three, Nassau and St. Lucie counties with two, and one bite each in Duval, Monroe, Palm Beach, Pinellas and St. Johns counties.

Historically, the International Shark Attack File notes that since 1882, Florida has had 827 unprovoked shark attacks. Volusia County is No. 1 by far with 303 while Brevard is No. 2 with 147 and Palm Beach County in third with 76.

The file also tracks the most dangerous months with data since 1926. So in the last 92 years, more than 70 attacks a month have been from July-October with 103 of the attacks coming in September.

The file offers the following tips for shark safety:

1. Always swim in a group. Sharks most often attack lone individuals.
2. Don't wander too far from shore. Doing so isolates you and places you away from assistance.
3. Avoid the water at night, dawn, or dusk. Many sharks are most active at these times and are better able to find you than you are to see them.
4. Don't enter the water if bleeding. Sharks can smell and taste blood, and trace it back to its source.
5. Don't wear shiny jewelry. The reflected light looks like shining fish

scales.

6. Don't go into waters containing sewage. Sewage attracts bait fishes, which in turn attract sharks.

7. Avoid waters being fished and those with lots of bait fishes. Diving seabirds are good indicators of such activities.

8. Don't enter the water if sharks are present. Leave immediately if sharks are seen.

9. Avoid an uneven tan and brightly colored clothing. Sharks see contrast particularly well, so use extra caution when waters are cloudy.

10. Don't splash a lot. Also, keep pets out of the water. Erratic movements can attract sharks.

11. Use care near sandbars or steep drop-offs. These are favorite hangouts for sharks.

12. Don't relax just because porpoises are nearby. Sightings of porpoises do not indicate the absence of sharks. Both often eat the same foods.

13. Don't try to touch a shark if you see one.

14. If attacked by a shark, the general rule is "Do whatever it takes to get away." Some people have successfully chosen to be aggressive, others passive. Some yelled underwater, others blew bubbles.

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