

Surfers, swimmers should exercise caution at the beach

BEN JONES

SPORTS EDITOR

The summer's high profile shark attacks have heightened concern about ocean safety.

News reports across the Southeastern United States of shark attacks have many people avoiding the Atlantic Ocean for fear of a possible encounter. For UNCW students, however, some of the main attractions to the university are the nearby beaches.

Many students continue to enjoy the sun and sand before the fall weather arrives. Evan Swink, a staff writer for *The Seahawk*, recently saw a sand shark not very far off the shore at the Blockade Runner at Wrightsville Beach. The colors of the shark and its movement allowed him to recognize the animal.

"Now there's proof that they are out there," Swink said. "I just have to keep that in mind and go about my business and simply mind my surroundings when in the water."

Much more often than sharks, surfers can be seen off the New Hanover County coastline. One surfer, Mike Horan, expressed concern about the recent attacks in the North Carolina-Virginia area. "It's kind of sketchy out there. Big ripples in the water kind of get me edgy. I'm in a surf contest [at Virginia Beach] this weekend, so I guess I'll just have to watch my toes." Horan is a 21-year-old member of the Virginia Beach Coast Guard.

Seth White, a 19-year-old Wilmington resident originally from Mooresville, N.C., said he didn't worry

SAFE SWIMMING TIPS

- Always stay in groups since sharks are more likely to attack a solitary individual.
 - Do not wander too far from shore. This isolates an individual and additionally places one far away from assistance.
 - Avoid being in the water during darkness or twilight hours when sharks are most active and have a sensory advantage.
 - Do not enter the water if bleeding from an open wound or if menstruating. A shark's olfactory ability is acute.
 - Wearing shiny jewelry is discouraged because the reflected light resembles the sheen of fish scales.
 - Avoid waters with known effluents or sewage and those being used by sport or commercial anglers, especially if there are signs of bait fish or feeding activity. Diving seabirds are good indicators of such action.
 - Sightings of porpoises do not indicate the absence of sharks. Both often eat the same food.
 - Use extra caution when waters are murky and avoid uneven tanning and bright colored clothing. Sharks see contrast particularly well.
 - Refrain from excess splashing and do not allow pets in the water because of their erratic movements.
 - Exercise caution when occupying the area between sandbars or near steep drop-offs. These are favorite hangouts for sharks.
 - Do not enter the water if sharks are known to be present and evacuate the water if sharks are seen while there. Do not harass a shark if you see one!
- Information provided by the Shark Research Program at the University of Florida Museum of Natural History.

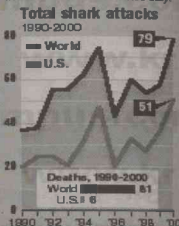
much about shark attacks. "I don't think there is really a problem. Actually, it's kind of good because it keeps a lot of people out of the water that you may end up running over," White said. "If you just respect [the sharks] then I think you'll be fine. It will all be over

soon anyway because the water's going to get colder and the sharks will leave."

Staff writer Evan Swink and Lifestyles Editor Sarah van Schagen contributed to this article.

Shark attacks

Total number of fatal and non-fatal attacks worldwide and where reported shark attacks occurred in the United States since July.



East Coast attacks

Locations of shark attacks since July 2001



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