

Report: Unprovoked shark attacks plummeted in 2024

Florida accounts for half of U.S. shark bites in 2024

By Jerald Pinson
Florida Museum of Natural History

2024 was an exceptionally calm year for shark bites. Worldwide, there were only 47 unprovoked attacks, down 22 from the previous year and well below the 10-year average of 70.

Four of last year's attacks resulted in fatalities, also a significant reduction from recent years.

The International Shark Attack File, maintained by the Florida Museum of Natural History, provides data on what are considered unprovoked bites, defined as incidents in which a person does not initiate contact with a shark. Instances in which a person intentionally or unintentionally initiates contact, including spearfishing and releasing sharks from nets or hooks, are not included in the report.

"We're interested in the natural patterns of shark behavior so that we can understand why people occasionally get bitten by these animals. Any cue or attribute that modifies an animal's natural behavior is something that, we as scientists, want to exclude," said Gavin Naylor, director of the Florida Program for Shark Research.

The United States consistently has the highest number of unprovoked bites, a trend that continued last year with a total of 28 reported incidents. An attack by an unknown shark species off the northwest



A tiger shark swims near the Bahamas.

GeraldSchombs - Unsplash

coast of Oahu, Hawaii resulted in the only unprovoked fatality in the U.S.

With warm waters and ample shoreline, Florida had a total of 14 bites, more than any other state. Of these, eight occurred in Volusia County, which bears the unofficial title of shark bite capital of the world. Though unconfirmed, many of these bites were likely from blacktip sharks, whose breeding grounds stretch along the northeast Florida coastline. Many of the sharks in this area are juveniles and haven't yet fully developed the ability to distinguish between humans and their natural prey, which includes fish, stingrays and other sharks.

In June, a spate of attacks in the Florida Panhandle took place within four miles of each other, injuring three people.

A trio of healthcare professionals — two nurses and one paramedic — were vacationing along Watersound Beach in South Walton, FL, where a woman bitten by a bull shark was carried ashore. They and other bystanders provided life-saving medical attention while first responders were en route to the scene. Less than two hours later, a shark bit two teenagers wading in the shallows of nearby Seacrest Beach.

Bull sharks and tiger sharks are common along Florida's northern coast, but they rarely venture into recreational areas.

"You'll see 20 to 30 of them patrolling the coast about 500 feet offshore, where they mind their own business," Naylor said. Nearby dune lakes that regularly dump freshwater into the sea were reportedly

blocked when the attacks occurred. This may have allowed schools of fish, which are invariably followed by sharks, to swim closer to shore than they otherwise would have.

As residents and tourists converge on the coastlines for summer holidays, the likelihood of a shark encounter increases. This was evident over the July 4 weekend when six people were injured by sharks in Texas and Florida. Five of these qualify as unprovoked bites.

"The South Padre Island bites were significant, with several incidents on the same day in the same vicinity," said International Shark Attack File manager Joe Miguez.

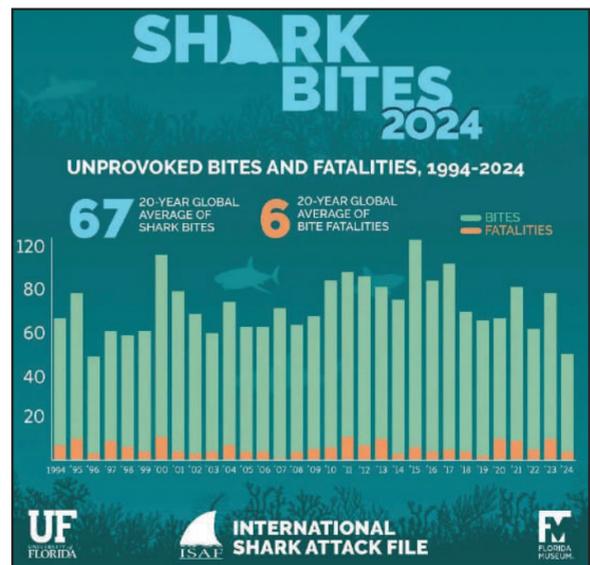
Padre Island, a thin sliver of sand dunes, tidal flats and coastal prairie that begins near the U.S. Mexico border and

curves north to Corpus Christi, is the largest barrier island

in the world, and its southern terminus is a major tourist attraction.

A woman swimming in murky water near one of the island's sandbars was bitten on her calf, and her husband sustained mild injuries while fending off the shark. Another man was bitten nearby, and a teenager received a small wound when a shark ran into her and grazed her leg, either with its teeth or its rough skin (shark skin is composed of small, flattened teeth called denticles).

Initial reports of the Padre Island attacks speculated that a single shark may have been responsible for the attacks, and the same idea was used to explain the consecutive attacks that took place a month earlier in the Florida panhandle. While it's possible for a single shark to bite multiple people in an area, there's little evidence to suggest this actually takes place.



Unprovoked bites and fatalities 1994-2024.

Courtesy of UF



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Dr. Laura Pratesi



Dr. Amy Davis



Dr. Amanda Simpson

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PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
ANNEXATION
CITY OF APOPKA

NOTICE is hereby given pursuant to Florida Statutes 171.044, the Apopka Code of Ordinances, Part III, Land Development Code, Article II, Section 2.5.1.A, that **Elisabeth Crane** has made an application to the City of Apopka City Council for an **ANNEXATION** of a property located at 2501 Rock Springs Road. This application relates to the following described property:

ORDINANCE NO. 3094

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF APOPKA, FLORIDA, TO EXTEND ITS TERRITORIAL AND MUNICIPAL LIMITS TO ANNEX PURSUANT TO FLORIDA STATUTE 171.044 THE HEREINAFTER DESCRIBED LANDS SITUATED AND BEING IN ORANGE COUNTY, FLORIDA, OWNED BY BDT IRREVOCABLE INCOME ONLY TRUST; LOCATED AT 2501 ROCK SPRINGS ROAD, COMPRISING 9.63 ACRES, MORE OR LESS; PROVIDING FOR DIRECTIONS TO THE CITY CLERK, SEVERABILITY, CONFLICTS, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Parcel Identification Number(s): 27-20-28-0000-00-072
Contains: 9.63 +/- acres

NOTICE is given that public hearings for Ordinance No. 3094 will be held by the City of Apopka City Council at its regularly scheduled meetings in the City Council Chambers of the Apopka City Hall, 120 E. Main Street, Apopka, Florida on **Wednesday, March 5, 2025 beginning at 1:30 P.M.** AND **Wednesday, March 19, 2025 at 7:00 P.M.**

Affected parties and the public may appear at the above listed hearings to speak. The proposed Annexation can be inspected at the Apopka Community Development Department located at Apopka City Hall on weekdays between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. City Hall address shown below. Please be advised that, under State law, if you decide to appeal a decision made with respect to this matter, you will need a record of the proceedings and may need to ensure that a verbatim record is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), persons with disabilities needing assistance to participate in any of these proceedings should contact the City Clerk's Office at 120 East Main Street, Apopka FL 32703, Telephone: 407-703-1704, no less than 48 hours prior to the proceeding.

February 28, 2025

Apopka City Council
Apopka Planning Commission
Community Development Department