

Saturday, March 18, 2017

Monterey, San Carlos Beach

Here is what Brian Correiar wrote about his encounter:

“It was a bit past 4:30 Saturday afternoon. I was in my kayak. I had paddled from the Breakwater ramp to Shell St PG and was on my way back. I was hit off the end of San Carlos Beach about 100 yards or so off the Monterey Bay Inn - probably over Metridium. So, I was near the end of a great paddle - I encountered dolphins off Point Cabrillo and a large group of very young harbor seals close in to Hopkins Station.

Suddenly, I heard a loud Bang as my kayak and I flew into the air. I landed outside my boat, look back to it and to my horror saw a large great white shark no more than three feet away had my kayak in its mouth. I could clearly see it's 2-inch teeth and it's black eye that looked lifeless.

I scrambled away from my boat as fast as I could and started kicking towards shore - really wishing that I was wearing fins! In between yelling "No God No" I was shocked at how many thoughts about how to survive ran through my head - don't splash, don't let your legs hang down, keep your eyes on the shark and swim away, don't act like a panicked seal. After Five minutes, maybe five years - it was hard to tell, I pulled out my Nautilus Lifeline and called in a mayday to the coast guard. They were having trouble hearing me. I spotted a sail boat and started frantically waving to them with my right arm as I operated the radio with my left hand.

While this was going on, the shark was using my boat as a chew toy. I saw it spin with the boat at least three times. It started pushing the boat towards me and then left the boat and headed for me. Suddenly it dove. I put my face in the water to see if it was under me, but I couldn't see anything.

I looked up and saw the sail boat approaching me. After some very quick explanations I said that I needed to get into the small boat. There was no ladder or transom. I had been in the water for about twenty minutes. I was wearing a 3-mil, but had forgotten my booties and was bear foot. My feet were numb and I was running on nothing but adrenaline. I could not get up into the boat or stand up on their motor. I asked them to call 911 and ask for coast guard assistance.

The coast guard showed up 5 minutes later and pulled me into their boat. All my gear was floating and was recovered. They took me back to the Breakwater..

In the parking lot I spoke with the people from the sailboat who came to my rescue. They were a young family who attended NPS. They were taking their young daughter out on her first sail. According to them, the shark was as big as my boat. I have a 14-ft kayak. Bite marks show that it had the whole girth of the boat in its mouth. My boat is covered with bite marks from end to end with multiple punctures. People told me that they could see the shark slapping the surface of the water with its fins as it mauled my boat.

I had always thought that great whites hit a target to test it and then backed off. This was a prolonged attack on the surface.

I've just gotten back from a steak dinner with Scott and Nancy and a very good bottle of wine donated by their neighbor. That's why we didn't make it to Member Night at the aquarium. I'm still not sure if I will sleep tonight, or want to try. I suspect that I just joined a very small club - one I never wanted to join!"

Brian Correiar