

Beat: Health

Large shark kills teenage surfer off Australia's east coast

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USPA News - A teenage surfer was killed Saturday when he was attacked by a large shark, possibly a great white, while bodyboarding in a popular surfing spot in Australia's eastern region, local police said. It marks the country's second fatal shark attack in only a week.

The latest attack happened shortly after 2 p.m. local time on Saturday when 19-year-old Zach Young was bodyboarding along with three friends about 100 meters (328 feet) offshore near a popular break known as 'The Well' at Riecks Point north of Coffs Harbour, a city on the northern coast of New South Wales (NSW). "His friends managed to get him to shore but he could not be revived and was pronounced dead at the scene. He had suffered significant injuries to his lower legs," a police spokesperson said. After the attack, Coffs Harbour Council ordered beaches between Sawtell and Woolgoolga to remain closed for at least 24 hours as a precaution. "Patrols of the area were carried out by NSW Police Marine Area Command and other agencies until 4 p.m., when it was called off due to poor weather conditions," the police spokesperson added. "Further searches will be carried out tomorrow if the weather conditions are favorable." It was not immediately clear which type of shark was responsible for Saturday's attack, but it comes soon after surfers in the area had reported seeing a great white close to the beach. Marine biologists from the NSW Department of Primary Industries are due to investigate Young's injuries to determine which type of shark was involved. The latest attack came only a week after a great white killed 35-year-old surfer Chris Boyd off the coast of Gracetown in Australia's western region. It was followed by an incident just hours later when a bodyboarder encountered another shark, also believed to have been a great white, near an island off Perth, but the man was able to push the shark away and escape without injuries. According to statistics from the International Shark Attack File (ISAF) at the University of Florida, sharks killed at least seven people worldwide last year, following 13 fatalities in 2011 that represented the highest number in nearly two decades. Surfers were the most affected group, accounting for about 60 percent of unprovoked attacks.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

UPA United Press Agency LTD

483 Green Lanes

UK, London N13NV 4BS

contact (at) unitedpressagency.com

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