

Chatham Town Office

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Seal / Shark Notice

NOTICE OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Chatham is fortunate to be surrounded by clean ocean and estuarine waters that support a wealth of sea life. The diversity of marine life can be seen by even the casual observer and one of the most observable local examples are the large herds of grey and harbor seals. The seal population in the vicinity of Chatham has grown substantially in the past decade and Chatham is now a year-round home to a few thousand seals. These seals come in close proximity to the shore and can be easily seen sunning themselves while hauled out on the sand bars and beaches, as well as while swimming and surfacing in the water.

Please note however, that the ocean waters near Chatham also are home to a variety of sharks, and seals are a staple of their diet. Therefore, it is not surprising that there have been recent confirmed reports of sharks feeding on seals in the vicinity of Chatham's ocean beaches. As recently as Sunday, August 12, 2007, the carcass of a seal was confirmed to have been partially eaten by a shark.

While it is rare for a shark to strike a human in the water, it can happen, and given the recent local shark sightings swimmers should exercise caution while swimming in Chatham's ocean waters. In particular, people should avoid swimming in waters in the direct proximity of seals where sharks may be in search of prey.

At this time, Chatham is not recommending that the beaches be closed, but simply that beachgoers and swimmers pay close attention to their surroundings while in the water and to not venture too far from shore.

If a shark is sighted, please exit the water and contact the proper authorities:

Chatham Coast Guard (508) 945-3830

Harbormaster (508) 945-5186

Police Department (508) 945-1213

Thank you for your attention.

Town of Chatham

August 14, 2007

