

MANY SEE SHARKS, BUT ALL GET AWAY

Matawan's Population, with
Weapons and Dynamite, Seek
Man-Eater That Killed Two.

SCIENCE ADMITS ITS ERROR

No Longer Doubted That Big Fish
Attack Men—New Theories as to
Why Coast Is Now Infested.

Matawan Creek, the little stream in which two swimmers were killed by a shark and another severely bitten on Wednesday, was alive with sharks yesterday, according to the scores of men who went out to hunt them with rifles, shotguns, boat hooks, harpoons, pikes, and dynamite.

Many fired from the banks or from motor boats at what they thought were sharks. Dozens were sure they had seen one shark or more. There was well-corroborated testimony indicating that there were at least four in the stream within two miles of where it enters Raritan Bay. A net of chicken wire has been strung across just above Wycoff's Dock at Matawan, where Stanley Fisher and Lester Stilwell were killed on Wednesday, and a stout fish net has been placed at a trolley bridge a mile below to hold the sharks in the creek until they can be shot or harpooned.

Several sharks were caught by fishers along the New Jersey and Long Island coasts yesterday and cut up, but no evidence was found that any of them had attacked bathers, four of whom have been killed and a fifth maimed by sharks within two weeks.

Shark Hunting a New Sport.

Bathing has come almost to a stop along the Jersey coast, especially near points where the man-eaters have made attacks, and a new sport, combined with a public service, the hunting of sharks, has sprung up.

Although a shark was reported in Sheepshead Bay yesterday, and others were caught off Long Island, bathing went on as usual at Coney Island, Brighton Beach, Long Beach, and other island resorts.

The body of Lester Stilwell, 10 years old, who was killed in Matawan Creek within 100 yards of the Matawan railroad station, was not brought to the surface yesterday, despite the diligent use of grappling hooks and dynamite at the spot where he was pulled under. The search was so thorough that its fruitlessness created the belief that the body had been eaten or carried away.

A partial investigation of the four shark killings, conducted by the American Museum of Natural History, has removed the last doubt from skeptical scientists as to whether a shark ever attacks a man. Dr. F. A. Lucas, Director of the Museum, the foremost authority on sharks in this country, has doubted that any type of shark ever attacked a human being, and has published his doubts, but the recent cases have changed his view. While admitting that sharks are sometimes man-killers, after all, Dr. Lucas said yesterday that the danger of a bather being bitten by a shark was about as remote as of his being hit by lightning.

Stray Tiger or White Shark.

The type of shark which has been killing men is still in doubt. John T. Nichols, Assistant Curator of Recent Fishes of the American Museum of Natural History, who went to Matawan, believes that a single shark, which has strayed 300 miles north of his habitat, has done all the killing and maiming. He believes it is a white shark or tiger shark, both of which are warm water fishes and have very rarely been seen north of Cape Hatteras.

The men who thought they saw sharks in Matawan Creek yesterday described them as from seven to fifteen feet long and of the ground shark family, which is common in New York waters, although seldom seen near the shore and almost never in small streams.

Many shots were fired at these sharks, but none was hurt, so far as is known, and all escaped. Their thick, tough skins would hardly take an impression from buckshot and would probably turn the .32 calibre bullets fired at them, according to Assistant Curator Nichols.

In the morning, when a large part of the population of Matawan had gathered to see the dynamiting over the spot where young Stilwell was lost and Stanley Fisher mortally bitten, the excitement became intense when many believed they saw sharks moving after each blast. The dynamite, which was set off on the surface of the water, forced masses into the bed of the stream and the bubbles which rose for some time after each charge were believed to come from sharks. Men on shore poised spears or nervously fingered the triggers of rifles while awaiting their quarry.

Three Sharks Seen.

Ralph Gall and others in a motor boat with him off Cliffwood, near Matawan, reported shortly after noon that they had seen three sharks while going up stream in a motor boat from Cliffwood toward Matawan. About a mile upstream the three sharks, which had evidently been driven ahead by the motor boat, passed under the bridge of the Central New Jersey Railroad at Matawan, according to Norman and Charles Tyce, Robert Burns, Antony Costick, and others, who were getting ready to attach a wire net under water to the piers of the bridge. Hunters above the bridge fired shots at sharks a few seconds later, and men in boats

Continued on Page 3.

MANY SEE SHARKS, BUT ALL GET AWAY

Continued from Page 1.

and on shore, armed with all sorts of weapons, tried to overtake the intruders in peaceful waters, but lost the scent.

A little later, when the tide ran out, the creek shrank to a trickle, connecting a series of water holes, and many of these were worked unsuccessfully by the hunters. A heavy rain came along, however, to muddy the waters and make sharks which might be hiding at the bottom invisible.

When he first went out to investigate the killing of George Bruder, who was bitten to death in the water at Spring Lake, Assistant Curator Nichols had a theory that the attack might have been made by a killer whale. This is a slender whale, often about 30 feet long, with black and white markings and short, stumpy teeth, which sometimes attacks the larger whales, runs them out of breath, and eats off their tongues and lips. It is not settled that the killer whale attacks humans, but Mr. Nichols thought there was as much reason to suppose it was a killer as to suppose it was a shark.

Would Have Been Seen Spouting.

Mr. Nichols did not put the ban on the killer whale theory because of the narrowness of Matawan Creek, which is in some places only about 20 feet wide, but yesterday when there was no report that a whale had been seen spouting in the creek he put the whale idea out of his calculations.

The mankiller is most likely a white shark, Mr. Nichols thinks. It is like an ordinary shark, but larger, with broad, pyramidal teeth above and below. A full-grown one is a pale-grayish white. They sometimes reach the length of thirty feet.

The next most likely supposition is, according to the scientist, that the mankiller is a tiger shark, which has a blunt head, a long, slender body, bearing spots until it attains great size, when they disappear. The adults of this species range from ten to thirty feet in length. They have a broad tooth with a saw edge and a slight outward flare. Both these sharks bear an infamous reputation in Southern waters, though many scientists have doubted tales of their ferocity toward humans.

"It is very certain that they do not ordinarily attack bathers," said Mr. Nichols, "but if one of them lost his way and got out of the Gulf Stream, where he could no longer find the green turtles and other food to which he was accustomed, he would forage about and, after once attacking a bather, might seek to make man his staple diet. My own belief is that a single fish of one of these types has killed all four of the bathers, and that if that one is killed the attacks will end."

Think Sharks Merely Hungry.

The belief of fishermen along the Jersey shore is that the maneaters are ordinary sharks turned ravenous by scanty diet. This is the time when the females of this type ordinarily come near shore to rear their young, but their numbers near land and even in inland waters is something entirely new. Mr. Nichols thinks the fishermen may possibly be right, although his own theory is different.

One explanation the fishermen offer of the shark scourge is the war. Many passenger ships, entering and leaving New York before the war, they say, threw over enough refuse to feed the sharks, but this diet has been cut down so that they have to hunt a new food supply. Another story is that the catching of so many moss bunkers, sluggish fish, said to be affected by sharks, has caused hunger to spur them shoreward for prey.

Moss bunkers, which are manufactured into oil and compost, have been netted in such enormous quantities for factories along the Jersey shore that within two years they have practically disappeared and the industry has about gone out of existence.

A shark scare thinned the bathers near Sheepshead Bay yesterday morning, after about fifty persons, who were at breakfast on the porch of the Beau Rivage Hotel at the foot of Emmons Avenue, had seen a fin gliding through the water near Thomas Richard, assistant steward of the hotel, who was swimming near a motorboat a few feet from the hotel. Many screamed when they saw Richard race for the motorboat and climb in, drawing his legs out of the water a fraction of a second before the ripple passed where he had been.

Splashed the Shark.

Gertrude Hoffman, the dancer, had the presence of mind to remember that she had read in THE TIMES that a bather can scare away a shark by splashing, and she beat up the water furiously when she saw a fin near her at 10 o'clock yesterday morning, while swimming several hundred feet off the foot of West Thirty-first Street, Coney Island. She was not sure afterward whether she had had her trouble for nothing or had barely escaped death.

A seven-foot shark was caught in the ocean between Elberon and Long Branch by Captain John Lundy yesterday. A ten-foot shark was pulled up with hook and line and finished off with a gaff and clubs yesterday by H. R. Gildersleeve and Leroy Reeves near Riverhead, L. I. The second shark in a week was caught yesterday at Fairfield Beach, a popular bathing beach near Bridgeport, Conn.

At Sch Girt yesterday Governor Fielder said he had been approached by several persons who wanted to know what he was going to do about the sharks and that he had told all that the local authorities must do whatever is done. "It is very evident from the widely scattered points at which at-

tacks have been made," the Governor said, "that the entire coast line is frequented by schools of sharks. No explanation has yet been offered for their presence, and I do not see how the State can do anything to protect bathers. It would require an enormous appropriation to patrol the 150 miles of coast.

SHARKS SEEN IN THE HUDSON.

Berkshire Sighted Two Headed Up the River Near Tarrytown.

Two very large fish, said to be sharks by those on board the Hudson River steamer Berkshire, passed the vessel going up the river, opposite Tarrytown, yesterday morning at about 5:30 o'clock. Their presence was detected when several passengers saw a large triangular fin pass the vessel with great speed.

Robert Palmer of Troy, N. Y., who spends his Winters in Southern latitudes and is familiar with sharks, told them the fin was that of a shark and a very large one. They went to the hurricane deck and told Captain Wilson about it and he was inclined to think it was a joke.

While the passengers were talking with him there was a cry of "Shark! Another shark!" and they looked to starboard, where they saw another large fin streaking up the river. The second fish seemed to follow the same course as the first and its fin was in sight for some time.

CAUGHT TWO SHARKS AT SEA.

Skipper Thinks Jersey Visitors Came from Newfoundland.

Captain R. J. De Shields of the Bermudian sloop-rigged pilot boat Sir George Somers, which arrived yesterday from St. George's to have a motor engine installed, said he was very much surprised to hear that man-eating sharks had bitten bathers off the New Jersey shore.

"We have plenty of sharks around Bermuda," the veteran skipper said, "but I have never heard of the big fish biting any one, although people bathe in the sea off shore all the year round. It is quite possible that the sharks have come in to shore from the Banks of Newfoundland in search of fish to eat, as the fish are very plentiful this Summer.

"Just after eight bells yesterday morning we sighted a shark fully fifteen feet long about 100 miles from Sandy Hook. Four days ago we caught two sharks with the hook, one eight feet and the other ten feet long. The fins were cut off to nail on the end of the boom, and the backbones were taken out of the sharks and balled in the galley to make walking canes of."

Captain De Shields, who, like the five members of his crew, is a native Bermudian, said the pilot boat left St. George's on July 1. The whole Atlantic Coast waters from Bermuda to Sandy Hook was swarming with fish, he said, and, in his opinion, that was the cause of the big man-eating sharks coming in from the Atlantic.