

# Visitors wary after shark attacks

By Adam Wagner

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OAK ISLAND | A pink-tinged sunset fell over the Ocean Crest Pier on Sunday, the thrumming of a helicopter's blades passing overhead the only thing breaking the sounds of the tide.

Walking down the pier, it was common to overhear snippets of conversation, often light-hearted, about sharks among the onlookers and fishermen lining the sides.

One of those fishermen

"I went directly into the ocean because I figured what are the chances two shark attacks would happen in the same day?"

**Ried Carlson**, 13-year-old resident of Greenville

was Ried Carlson, 13, of Greenville. Carlson arrived in Oak Island with his family shortly after the second shark attack late Sunday afternoon.

After hearing about the

incident on TV, he said, "I went directly into the ocean because I figured what are the chances two shark attacks would happen in the same day?"

Even though Ried isn't

terribly concerned about another attack, he added that he will likely keep an eye out when he's out in deep water.

Another fisherman, Ronnie Banks, said he'd seen a 5-foot-long shark near the shore about 9 a.m. Sunday.

Banks said he thought it was odd to see the shark so near the shore, but that it wouldn't change his already-cautious habits at all.

"About knee deep is as far as I can go," Banks said,

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People gathered on the pier at Oak Island watch a helicopter fly over the beach Sunday. Authorities are keeping people out of the water after two shark attacks in one day. Photo by Adam Wagner

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"and then just as soon as I set the fishing rod, I get back out."

A short while later, Alice Hiatt, an Oak Island resident, convened an impromptu prayer circle of about 10 people on the beach. The group stood in rapt silence on the strand, holding hands as the surf crashed just feet away.

Hiatt, whose husband is on

the Oak Island Ocean Rescue team, had listened to scanner traffic earlier in the day with distress.

"My heart was just broken," she said. "I was so sad. I just sat down in my living room and prayed because I didn't know what else to do."

Local fishermen, Hiatt added, have been whispering that there are many more sharks in the area now than in years past. If anything, she said, she hopes visitors

to the beach will be more aware of their surroundings.

"It should remind folks who come here to be more aware of nature," Hiatt said. "We are blessed with this beautiful beach, but you've got to realize there are forces of nature you can't control."

Derron Lee of Raleigh was part of that prayer circle. Along with his wife and his boys, who are 11 and 4 years old, Lee had begun his vaca-

tion at Oak Island on Saturday.

Sunday morning, he said, they were out in waist-deep water. When a reporter told Lee about the shark attacks, he was surprised and said his family's plans were going to change.

"We won't be going in the ocean for a while," Lee said, adding he is pleased that his hotel has a salt water pool.

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