

Some beaches have nets to keep out sharks

By Michael Slezak, The Guardian, adapted by Newsela staff on 02.25.16

Word Count **348**



A great white shark swims near Isla Guadalupe, Mexico. A new study calls shark nets ineffective. Photo: Wikipedia

Swimming in the ocean is fun. It is not as much fun when sharks are around. That is why some beaches have shark nets. The nets are meant to catch sharks. They are placed underwater near beaches. The idea is to keep sharks away from swimmers.

A new study found that shark nets are not very useful.

Laurie Laurenson is a scientist in Australia. He studied shark attacks from the past 50 years. He found that shark nets do not work.

Sharks Can Swim Around Nets

Laurenson is not the only one who thinks this. Barry Bruce also studies shark attacks. He agreed that the nets are not useful. They are too small to trap many sharks, he explained.

He said that nets are only a few hundred meters long. (One meter is about one yard.) Sometimes there are only two nets protecting a very long beach. Sharks can swim around the nets. Sharks can also easily swim over them.

"You have to be an unlucky shark to get caught," he said.

And Some Nets Catch Wrong Sharks

Bruce said that some nets had caught sharks before. It did not mean they had stopped any shark attacks though. The sharks caught in the nets were not the kind that like to bite people.

Laurenson found that we might not need to kill sharks at all. People used to think that the more sharks there were, the more attacks there would be. This turned out to be incorrect.

Natalie Banks works to protect ocean animals. She pointed out that shark nets do not just trap sharks. They also harm other sea animals. She had seen dolphins, turtles, and stingrays dying in shark nets.

Shark Scientists Disagree

Yet some people believe shark nets are helping. Vic Paddemors is a shark scientist. He thinks beaches with shark nets are safer. He also believes that nets have stopped many attacks.

Laurenson disagrees. He pointed out some numbers. The numbers show that when there are more people at the beach, there are more shark attacks. Shark nets do not seem to matter much.