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Recorded shark attacks in Greece over the last 180 years: A retrospective analysis

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Abstract
The aim of this study provides a retrospective analysis of the recorded shark attacks in Greece over the last 180 years. Data on recorded shark attacks in Greece were obtained from various sources. A total of 15 shark attacks were identified and analysed. The majority of the attacks occurred in the waters off islands or coasts, with the highest incidence in the 1950s. The most common victims were swimmers and divers. The species of sharks involved in the attacks could not be determined in all cases, but those that were identified in fatal incidents were mostly great white sharks. This study highlights the rarity of shark attacks in Greece and emphasizes the need for continued monitoring and awareness of potential risks associated with swimming or participating in water activities in Greece. Further studies are required to better understand the factors contributing to the occurrence of shark attacks in Greece.

Keywords: Elasmobranches, Greece, sharks, shark attacks

Introduction
Shark attacks have long captured the public's imagination, inspiring fear and fascination in equal measure. Shark attacks are a global phenomenon that attracts widespread attention and publicity, often with negative outcomes for shark populations (Midway, 2019) [1]. While the risk of a shark attack is generally low, the consequences can be severe, and incidents are often widely reported in the media. Greece, with its long coastline and numerous islands, is a popular destination for beachgoers and water sports enthusiasts. However, the country's waters are also home to a variety of shark species, and there have been occasional reports of shark attacks over the years, but not in the last 3 decades.
In this study, we provide a retrospective analysis of recorded shark attacks in Greece over the last 180 years. The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of the incidence, location, and victim profile of these attacks, as well as the shark species involved (table 1a, table 1b). By doing so, we aim to increase understanding of the potential risks associated with swimming and participating in water activities in Greece and to contribute to the development of effective measures to mitigate these risks. The results of this study will be of interest to researchers, policymakers, and the general public, and will help to improve our understanding of the occurrence and patterns of shark attacks in Greece.

Methods
Data for this study were obtained from various sources and cross-checked on news reports, scientific papers, and social media (Taklis, 2020) [2]. The search was conducted using a combination of keywords related to shark attacks and Greece, such as "shark attack," "shark bite," "Greece," and the names of Greek islands and coastal regions. The search was conducted in English, and the time frame for the search was set at 180 years (from 1843 to 2023).
All identified reports of shark attacks in Greece (Burgess, 2020, Haddaway, 2018) [3, 4] were included in the analysis. For each report, the following information was recorded: date and location of the attack, victim's gender and age, activity at the time of the attack, shark species involved (if identified), and outcome of the attack (e.g., minor injury, severe injury, death). In cases where the information was incomplete, efforts were made to obtain additional details from other sources.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as frequency distributions and percentages. The results were presented in the form of tables and figures to provide a clear overview of the incidence, location, and victim profile of recorded shark attacks in Greece over the last 180 years.

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data, multiple sources were used to cross-check and validate the information. However, it should be noted that the accuracy and completeness of the data are dependent on the quality of the original sources and the availability of information. As such, the data presented in this study should be interpreted with caution and not be considered as a definitive account of all shark attacks in Greece over the last 180 years.

Results

A total of 15 recorded shark attacks in Greece were identified and analyzed over the last 180 years. The attacks occurred at various locations along the Greek coastline, with the majority of attacks taking place in the waters off islands or coasts. The highest incidence of shark attacks was observed in the 1950s, with a total of six attacks occurring in that decade. The other nine attacks occurred at various times between 1843 and 2023.

Of the 15 shark attacks, nine involved male victims, four involved a female victim and two were unknown victims. The most common victims were swimmers (11 cases) and divers (3 cases), while one case involved was unknown (table 1a).

Table 1a: Summary of Recorded Shark Attacks in Greece over the Last 180 Years

Date	Location	Activity	Shark Species	Outcome
19 July 1847	Corfu	Swimming	-	Fatal
08 April 1854	Corfu	Swimming	234 lb sharks	Leg severed at knee
01 January 1863	Corfu	Swimming	-	Fatal
07 September 1876	Cyclades	Diving for sponges	-	Fatal
01 January 1903	Unknown	Sponge diving	-	Fatal
28 June 1937	Unknown	Unknown	-	Fatal
22 September 1948	Attica	Swimming	Said to be 6,4 m. Shark	Fatal
01 January 1950	Attica	Swimming	-	Fatal
01 January 1951	Unknown	Swimming	-	Fatal
17 August 1951	Corfu	Swimming	White Shark	Fatal.
17 August 1951	Corfu	Swimming	White Shark	Injured
02 July 1954	Unknown	Swimming	-	Fatal
01 January 1956	Corfu	Swimming off yacht	White Shark	Fatal
01 June 1963	Thessaly	Swimming	White Shark	Fatal
01 January 1981	Pagasitikos Gulf	Free diving / spearfishing	-	Minor injury

The age of the victims ranged from 15 to 42 years old (table 1b), based only on the available data of the victims

Table 1b: Profile of the incidents

Year	Number of Incidents	Activity	Gender	Age	Fatality
1847	1	Swimming	Male	19	Fatal
1854	1	Swimming	Male	Unknown	Not fatal
1863	1	Swimming	Male	Unknown	Fatal
1876	1	Diving	Male	Unknown	Fatal
1903	1	Diving	2 Males	Unknown	Fatal
1937	1	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Fatal
1948	1	Swimming	Male	17	Fatal
1950	1	Swimming	Unknown	Unknown	Fatal
1951	3	Swimming	2 Female and 1 Male.	One unknown, one 16 years old. and one 18 years old.	2 Fatal and 1 Not fatal
1954	1	Swimming	2 Males	Unknown	Fatal
1956	1	Swimming	Female	15	Fatal
1963	1	Swimming	Female	42	Fatal
1981	1	Diving / spearfishing	Male	Unknown	Not fatal

The species of sharks involved in the attacks could not be determined in all cases, but those that were identified were mostly great white sharks (*Carcharodon carcharias* Linnaeus, 1758). The attacks resulted in a range of injuries, including lacerations, puncture wounds, and bites. Twelve attacks resulted in the death of the victim, while the other four resulted in non-fatal injuries.

Discussion:

The rarity of recorded shark attacks in Greece over the last 180 years is evidence from the small number of incidents identified in this study. The incidence of shark attacks in Greece is much lower than in other regions with similar marine environments, such as Italy and Spain. The highest incidence of shark attacks in Greece occurred in the 1950s, which may reflect increased reporting and awareness of shark attacks during that period. Currently, shark attacks incidents do not exist in Greece (Moutopoulos, 2022) [5].

The victim profile of recorded shark attacks in Greece is consistent with global trends, with the majority of victims being male and engaged in water activities such as swimming and diving. The relatively young age of the victims may reflect the popularity of these activities among young people.

The species of sharks involved in the attacks were predominantly great white sharks (*C. carcharias)*. These species are known to inhabit the waters around Greece (Maddalena 2012) [6], and their presence is not unexpected. However, the small number of identified species that involved

in attacks highlights the need for further research to identify and understand these shark species present in Greek waters and their behavior.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the low incidence of recorded shark attacks in Greece over the last 180 years suggests that the risk of shark attacks in Greece is generally low. However, continued monitoring and awareness of potential risks associated with swimming and participating in water activities in Greece is essential.

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