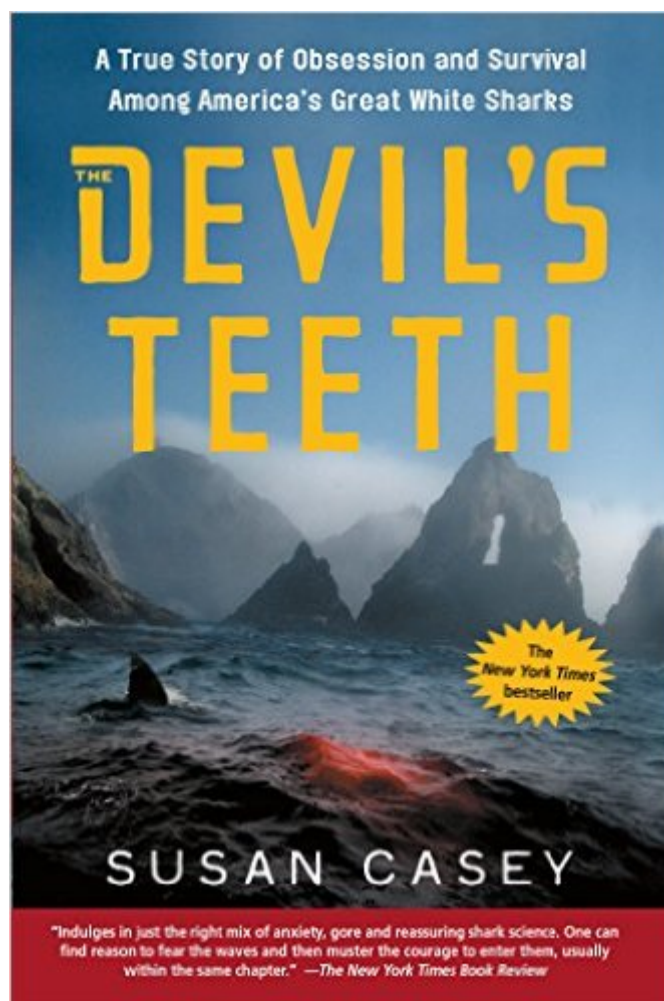


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The Devil's Teeth: A True Story Of Obsession And Survival Among America's Great White Sharks



Synopsis

A journalist's obsession brings her to a remote island off the California coast, home to the world's most mysterious and fearsome predators--and the strange band of surfer-scientists who follow them. Susan Casey was in her living room when she first saw the great white sharks of the Farallon Islands, their dark fins swirling around a small motorboat in a documentary. These sharks were the alphas among alphas, some longer than twenty feet, and there were too many to count; even more incredible, this congregation was taking place just twenty-seven miles off the coast of San Francisco. In a matter of months, Casey was being hoisted out of the early-winter swells on a crane, up a cliff face to the barren surface of Southeast Farallon Island--dubbed by sailors in the 1850s the "devil's teeth." There she joined Scot Anderson and Peter Pyle, the two biologists who bunk down during shark season each fall in the island's one habitable building, a haunted, 135-year-old house spackled with lichen and gull guano. Two days later, she got her first glimpse of the famous, terrifying jaws up close and she was instantly hooked; her fascination soon yielded to obsession--and an invitation to return for a full season. But as Casey readied herself for the eight-week stint, she had no way of preparing for what she would find among the dangerous, forgotten islands that have banished every campaign for civilization in the past two hundred years. *The Devil's Teeth* is a vivid dispatch from an otherworldly outpost, a story of crossing the boundary between society and an untamed place where humans are neither wanted nor needed.

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Customer Reviews

The whole premise of the book sounds interesting, as I am also interested in great whites and I looked forward to reading it. I was enjoying it until the more I read I realized it was merely about the obsession of the writer than it is about the sharks and the research project she is researching. Yes, she focuses on the scientists and the island in great detail, which in itself makes it worthwhile reading. However, in the end, her desire to see the sharks up close actually causes the termination of the entire shark research project, and the termination of employment for the knowledgeable, caring scientist in charge that assisted her in trying to realize her dream. Her dream became his nightmare. She should have stayed home and let the sharks and their researchers be. If you read it for the sharks, you'll enjoy it, but you'll quickly discover what an selfish idiot Susan Casey is. The writing is average, but with a keen eye you'll appreciate. The "True story of obsession and survival among America's Great white sharks" is about her and not the project, which is what I thought the book was about. My mistake. Not only can you not judge a book by its cover, you can no longer judge a book by its title either. Another reviewer stated succinctly, "The author and her persistence to observe activities on the island leads to the demise of the entire shark research project."

Susan Casey, a journalist, becomes intrigued by white sharks and the Farallon Islands some thirty miles from San Francisco. After fighting through restrictions and barriers, she manages to get onto the island and observe a group of scientists studying predation by great white sharks within the so-called red triangle. Her description of the islands flora and fauna are very good. Detailed descriptions of shark attacks also give the story some excitement. She doesn't provide much scientific detail about the research she observed; however, she's a journalist, not a biologist. She's a story-teller and does a good job. If you're a shark junkie who enjoys scientific detail about the behavior and biology of sharks, you'll most certainly be disappointed. On the other hand, if you enjoy tales of natural adventures and the hardships endured along the way, you'll be entertained.

I've just finished reading this book and have to agree, I was also upset and angry that Peter Pyle lost his job and didn't get to be the first to ride the 'perfect wave' in shark alley - all because of Susan Casey. After reading the Q&A given to the author on this site and seeing that she 'blagged' her way into various summer jobs - I have to wonder if she didn't 'blag' Peter that she could handle a yacht at sea. Maybe it would have been better for the Farallones Great White Shark project, if she'd just left them alone. Having said this, I did enjoy the first 2/3 of the book. The last part is just Casey talking about her experiences on the yacht. You're not given any scientific answers as to why the huge 'sister' sharks, haven't been seen at the Farallones in three years. There was no real

conclusion about the conservation of the sharks, what the biologist think or what we could do to help. The only thing we're told is that they might be extinct by the next decade. Casey's description of the Islands and wildlife, are detailed and magnificent enough to make me schedule a ride on the 'superfish'. But in the end it just seems a shame that Peter lost his job, over a book that didn't really do the plight & fragility of the Great Whites' existence enough justice.

THE DEVILS TEETH is an exceptionally well-written account of the Farallon Islands and, in particular, the white shark research project that has been based there over the past several decades. Susan Casey profiles Peter Pyle and Scot Anderson, two biologists who have been leading shark research at the islands which are located just 27 miles due west of San Francisco. She also documents her own (ultimately disastrous) experiences gaining access to the islands which are largely prohibited to the public. The stars of the story are the sharks themselves, who turn out to be far more individualistic and personable than you would probably ever imagine. The white sharks of the Farallon Islands are perhaps the best studied in the world in their natural state. The circus atmosphere which surrounds white shark research in places like Australia and South Africa have largely compromised the sharks natural habitat making it difficult to observe sharks behaving naturally. The Farallon Islands, known to 19th-century mariners as "The Devil's Teeth," are a dangerous and foreboding locale, but one that lends itself well to scientific investigations. Casey takes us through the history of exploitation, inhabitation, and research that has taken place on the islands over the past 150 years, and she includes a healthy amount of information about the other wildlife in evidence on and around the islands. But she clearly (and admittedly) developed an obsession with the sharks, and the narrative of the book is continually steered back toward them. The thing that struck me the most in THE DEVIL'S TEETH was the description of the individual white sharks' strong personalities. I would never have thought that a white shark could be described in terms of being "gentle and maternal" (Whiteslash) or "happy-go-lucky and somewhat goofy" (Half Fin). Other individual sharks, of course, had more sinister reputations. Still, one can come away from reading this book with the impression that the great white shark is truly a likeable animal, if not exactly huggable. Another revelation (to me, at least) was the evidence that at least some white sharks, like whales, apparently have fixed migratory routes that can take them thousands of miles through the course of a year. Some (the females) appear to have two-year migrations since they only show up every other year in the Farallones. Susan Casey takes us into an exclusive place, to be sure: a world where cage divers and eco-tourists are looked down upon with disdain. In a way, it hardly seems fair that the experience of witnessing the thrill of a white shark kill

should be so restricted. As Peter Pyle himself said, "I feel sorry for anyone who hasn't seen one." Of course, it is understandable. As in nearly other place in the world where white sharks congregate, the delicate ecosystem of the Farallon Islands would suffer tragically and research effort would be compromised from increased human intrusion. THE DEVIL'S TEETH is a glimpse into the world of two committed biologists and the truly majestic animals they study. Jeremy W. Forstadt

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