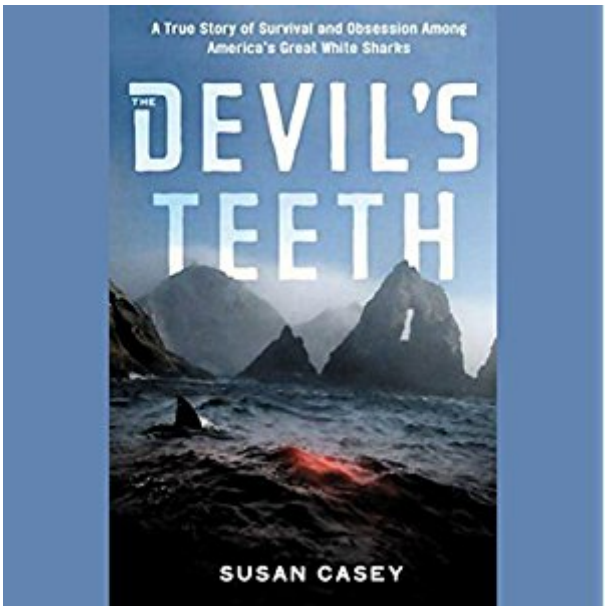
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The Devil's Teeth: A True Story Of Obsession And Survival Among America's Great White Sharks



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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 themSusan 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. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

for me this story became yet another instance where monied interests sought to exploit a phenomenal natural harmony. felt quite tragic actually, yet i'm satisfied to have been brought a bit closer to the realities of the white sharks. i think the regulatory forces are quite justified in holding a high bar above the heads of anyone on the island, i just wish they would extend their jurisdiction to the waters around the islands as well. it's farcical that a dedicated scientist would be denied access to the islands when boatloads of gawkers are allowed to putter about desensitizing the sharks to their ways. the whole worth of the farrollones is that the human element is very close to non-existent. essentially, the book is about the loss of the perfect observation scenario for developing a deeper understanding of the sharks, thereby increasing the potential for protecting them from our fears, which really are ridiculous, these sharks aren't interested in hunting human flesh, every attack is a case of confused identity, and anyone who surfs, dives, etc. in the red triangle has it coming, and probably is aware of this fact. and i'm pretty sure there was another layer of relating not revealed in the book that influenced the cataclysmic mistake.

The Farallon IslandsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •a rocky and barren chain of jutting, granite peaksÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •sit just 27 miles from the San Francisco coastline. A handful of biologists reside in this remote outpost to study the bird, pinniped, and shark populations. Every fall, great white sharks arrive to feed on the local seal population and Ms. Casey delves into the research undertaken in the surrounding waters. ItÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s a story of grit and terror, and a testament to how little we know about these fascinating and monstrous creatures. Casey also recounts the history of the islandÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •at one point, the eggs sold in the Bay area markets were collected from the massive seabird population, nearly depleting their numbers. The main attraction, of course, is the sharks, with personalities as varied as the people who investigate them. By the end of the book, despite a lingering fear of the giant fish, I couldnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t help but gain a healthy respect for the apex predators of the ocean. This is a riveting and enlightening read.

The book was filled with info on the islands and how they were the mega center for great white sharks. Learning of all the research that was being done there by various scientists was also worthwhile I did feel that the story line did begin to drag at about the 70% point. From then on out I was searching for the end.

I enjoyed this book, primarily because I like the author's writing style. That's not to say that it wasn't

frustrating and didn't leave me with lots of questions. I learned something about various things (muir eggs, fur seal trade, great whites, the Farallon Islands' history, etc). It is definitely a story of obsession, which in the end, as far as I can tell, leads to the termination of the project. While I got caught up in the writer's day to day life on the yacht, it was never clear what she was seeking to learn about great whites that she was going to impart to her readers that justified the tremendous risk of bringing her along. After her mishaps cause the project to end, I don't find any remorse or or realization that her indulgence in her obsession caused unfortunate consequences. Everyone went their separate ways, the end. So where do the tagged sharks go? I wish there was much more about the sharks. Oh well, it made for an exciting story, other than wondering what she was doing there in the first place.

What too few other reviewers have pointed out about this book, is how exceptionally well Susan Casey writes. It helps that her subject is fascinating, really compelling, but even with a fascinating subject the book wouldn't be half as good without Susan's witty and deft skill as a writer. Pg 159-160: "The Hunchback was a humongous Sister with a Quasimodo hump...her scale made the seal look like a bath toy...The great white was so big that she blocked out the light..beside the freighter I could make out the slime eel, a primitive creature with five hearts and no eyes that bores its way inside fish, devouring them from within...there was an albino sturgeon with ruby eyes, and a bioluminescent viperfish glowing like fire. Enormous jellies floated among them, trailing poisonous tentacles. As we looked down from the freighter's deck, the HUnchback ghosted by, orbiting like a stray moon."Susan gives an account of a place that very few people will ever see or step foot on, as no one but scientists are allowed land access on the Farallon islands. And when you read her account of the appalling human history on these islands, the murder and rampaging that humans have done, how we brought to the verge of extinction the population of fur seals and then common murres at the islands, as well as the use of the waters surrounding the Farallons for the dumping of barrels of nuclear waste, one is tempted to suggest we ban even scientists from touching these precious places so important to so many animals.Fortunately for the animals who live and breed there, the Farallons are a place very hostile to human habitation, as is made abundantly clear by Susan's accounts of the many discomforts she and her companion scientists endured to observe great white sharks and other animals on the islands. It really boggles my mind how anyone could endure such conditions for more than a few months in their life, the conditions are not only so uncomfortable, but also dangerous.A partial list of the challenges: No docking facilities (islands too rocky and waters too rough), no safe swimming or surfing (surfboards get to get "tested" by sharks

when laid out -- large bites taken out of them), waters between San Francisco Bay and the islands are considered the most dangerous on the West coast, thousands of resident birds scream 24 hours a day and gulls often dive-bomb humans, winds howl and break parts off buildings, the ground is rocky and barren and covered with bird carcasses or baby birds stuffed in every available crevice, the ammonia from bird guano is omnipresent and in places not only overpowering but deadly -- at least one person died from the ammonia fumes from the guano. At the islands, one is forced to a closeup encounter with nature's cruelest scenarios -- sharks biting off the back half of a seal, who then cries while attempting to climb out of the water, missing half of its body -- routine decapitations of elephant seal babies and seals -- gulls by the thousands murdering other birds on the island by pecking them in the head with beaks used as swords (referred to by scientists as P.I.H.= peck in head). The climb to the lighthouse is on a slope covered with loose rock, where it is easy to fall and be injured, and the lighthouse is an exceptionally windy place where it is quite uncomfortable to stand and look around, which scientists must do hours at a time -- and there is a resident ghost on the island, a woman in a white dress who has been seen by many scientists -- just the kind of people who usually don't believe in ghosts. Then too one has to deal with lack of water for showers, the bird lice that climb up your legs and get in your hair, the "anus flies" that spend most of their time in seal's behinds and come out to climb on your face or hair afterwards -- (and then the lack of water for regular showers becomes all the more appalling) ,meals that grow less tasty as supplies run out and dinners have to be cobbled together with whatever cans of something are left, sleeping on old, dirty mattresses in rooms with peeling paint and grime on the walls, and the reality that if you suddenly develop cabin fever, you are stuck -- you can't just get off the island whenever you feel like it, particularly in a storm. And then, borrowing a boat to use to live in and conduct shark research out of, and having to deal with a never-functioning plumbing system that results in the toilet vomiting forth geysers of excreta, having to grope around in subterranean areas of the boat in a stinking bilge vat to search for the hose or part that might need repairing, and then getting seasick and unable to leave the boat during rough seas. Oh, and finally being sued and losing one's job when a storm breaks a boat's anchor and results in the drifting away of the borrowed boat -- found in quite bad condition a year later about 500 miles away.By the end of the story, the reader gets the picture -- about the only thing lacking on the Farallon islands to make it more hostile to humans, is some pandemic like Ebola.So, put it all together, and I am already itching to get way far away from these islands, without having ever gotten anywhere near them. It is hard to imagine that anyone would have the interest or the tenacity to stay there for years at a time, which the scientists Peter and Scot did, to study the sharks. They deserve a lot of respect for

that.Excellent book and quite unforgettable story!

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