



# The Devil's Teeth: A True Story of Obsession and Survival Among America's Great White Sharks

By Susan Casey

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**The Devil's Teeth: A True Story of Obsession and Survival Among America's Great White Sharks** By Susan Casey

**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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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

In a post-*Jaws*/Discovery Channel world, unearthing fresh data on great white sharks is a feat. So credit Susan Casey not just with finding and spotlighting two biologists who have done truly pioneering field research on the beasts but also with following them and their subjects into the heart of one of the most unnatural habitats on Earth: the Farallon Islands. Though just 30 miles due west of San Francisco, the Farallones--nicknamed the Devil's Teeth for their ragged appearance and raging inhospitality--are utterly alien, which may explain why each autumn, packs of great whites return to gorge on the seals and sea lions that gather there before returning to the Pacific and beyond. That Casey, via her biologist buddies Peter Pyle and Scot Anderson, can even report that sharks apparently follow migratory feeding patterns is a revelation. Throughout *The Devil's Teeth*, Casey makes clear that year upon year of observing the sharks have given Pyle and Anderson (and by extension, us) insights into shark behavior that are entirely new and too numerous to list. The otherworldly Farallon Islands, meanwhile, also dominate Casey's engaging tale as she charts their transformation from ultradangerous source of wild eggs in the 19th century to ultradangerous real-life shark lab and bird sanctuary today. Despite the plethora of factoids on offer, Casey's style is consistently digestible and very amusing. She also has a knack for putting things into perspective. Take this characteristic passage:

The Farallon great whites are largely unharassed. They might cross paths with the occasional boatload of day-trippers from San Francisco, but they're subjected to none of the behavior-altering coercion that nature's top predators regularly endure so that people can sit in the Winnebago... and get a look at them. This is important because despite their visibility at the Farallones, and despite the impressive truth that sharks are so old they predate *trees*, great whites have remained among the most mysterious of creatures."

By book's end, it's hard to know what's more captivating: The biologists' groundbreaking data, Casey's primer on the evolution of the Farallones, the islands' symbiotic relationships with the sharks, the gulls and sea lions they attract, or the outpost's resident ghosts. Frankly, it's a nice problem to have. --*Kim Hughes*

### Getting to Know the Great White

#### From Publishers Weekly

From its startling opening description of scientists racing to the bloody scene where a shark has decapitated a seal, this memoir--cum--natural and cultural history of the Farallon Islands--"the spookiest, wildest place on Earth"--plunges readers into the thrills of shark watching. Casey, a sportswriter with recurring dreams about deep-sea creatures, "became haunted" by the 211-acre archipelago 27 miles west of San Francisco when she saw a BBC documentary about Peter Pyle and Scot Anderson, biologists who study the great white sharks there. The islands are the only place on Earth where scientists can study the animals in their natural habitat. These evolutionary ancients (sharks lived 200 million years before dinosaurs) can be as large as Mack trucks, eat suits of armor, are both fierce and friendly, and, according to Casey, are an addictive fascination for those lucky enough to encounter them. Casey's three-week solo stay on a yacht anchored in shark waters is itself an adventure, with the author evacuating just hours before the yacht disappeared in a storm. Her suspenseful narrative perfectly matches the drama and mystery of these islands, their resident sharks and the scientists who love them. Photos.

From [Booklist](#)

Each September a group of great white sharks gathers off Farallon Islands--a 211-acre, 10-island archipelago in the Pacific Ocean, 27 miles off San Francisco--and remains there for about three months. For 15 years, biologists Scot Anderson and Peter Pyle have studied them and concluded that the same sharks return to the same location each year. These islands--protected as a national wildlife refuge--are the only place where it's possible to study their behavior naturally in the wild. Anderson and Pyle can recognize each shark and have named them; there's Betty and Mama, Spotty and T-Nose, among others. Casey, a development editor at Time Inc., joined the biologists for eight weeks to gather material for the book, which has 16 pages of color photographs. The result is a detailed and absorbing account of these awesome creatures. *George Cohen*  
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hangout men. What? Still don't get it, oh come on its identified as reading friends.

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