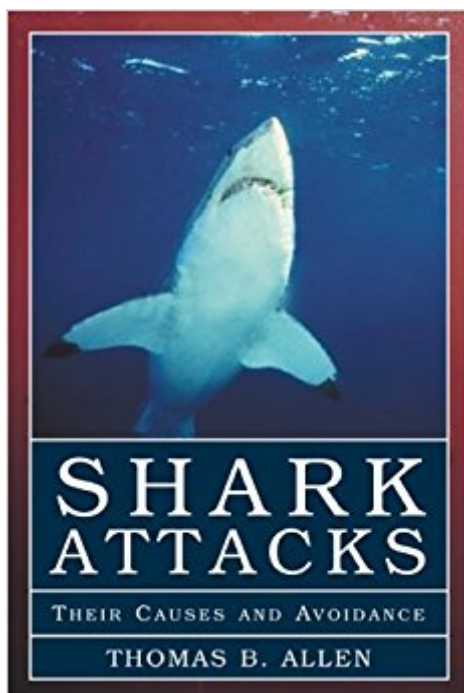


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Shark Attacks: Their Causes And Avoidance



Synopsis

An unflinching look at the terrifying phenomenon of shark attacks from the author of *The Shark Almanac*.

Book Information

Hardcover: 312 pages

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Customer Reviews

The fear of sharks may be exaggerated but it is not irrational....Makes for surprisingly fascinating reading. -- American Way Magazine

The shark is so well adapted to its element that its existence on the planet actually predates trees. When people enter that element in increasing numbers, as they have in recent years, the results can be tragic and seemingly arbitrary. Author Tom Allen has carefully researched documented shark attacks from all over the world. The result is the most thorough and informative book to date on the phenomenon. *Shark Attacks* contains the harrowing personal stories of shark attack survivors, expert opinions from marine biologists, and the latest scientific information on shark behavior. Allen's fascinating analysis explains: why so many attacks occur in water less than five feet deep; which species are killers; what triggers an attack; behavior just before an attack; whether shark nets help swimmer safety; why more than two-thirds of victims are surfers; environmental and seasonal conditions that contribute to attacks; why it is better to be below a shark than above it; how to avoid becoming a shark's prey. (6 1/4 X 9 1/4, 316 pages, color photos, b&w photos, illustrations, diagrams, charts)

This book is an EXCELLENT book on shark attacks. Thomas B. Allen was a co-author of another book I had read about sharks ("Shadows in the Sea"), so I knew it was going to be a good one. I recommend this book highly to anyone who enjoys books on sharks and shark attacks. Very informative.

We must truly have become a society of victims. Now even the shark, once the "eating machine" and "primordial predator," has been bestowed victimhood in Thomas Allen's "Shark Attacks." The New Shark, as Allen calls it, is being finned, hooked, poisoned and otherwise exterminated by humans, the new top predator. There is some truth in this. Only the United States, Australia and New Zealand manage shark fisheries. Everywhere else, sharks are free for all. But it does not follow, as Allen thinks it does, that worrying about shark attacks is "irrational." In fact, after introducing the New Shark, Allen then relates incident after incident of sharks behaving like Old Sharks, chomping down on what comes their way. Among humans, these are overwhelmingly surfers. According to various surveys, surfers are the targets in something like three out of five shark attacks. This is because surfers and sharks are attracted to the same areas of the ocean, though for different reasons. Or at least, good surf means a roiled bottom, and sharks apparently make many attacks on humans because -- despite having more kinds of sense organs than we have -- they depend a lot on eyesight. But, says Allen, while surfers make up the most total victims, the most dangerous part of the ocean, from a shark-human perspective, is where seals and sea lions swim. Records are none too good, even today, though they are getting better, but Allen presents graphs showing that numbers of shark attacks off U.S. coastlines correlate pretty closely with population growth. Sharks are not very dangerous. Bees kill several times more humans than sharks, and in every U.S. state that has both sharks and alligators, there are more alligator attacks. But a book called "Bee Attacks" is not likely to sell as well as a book called "Shark Attacks." As a curiosity, Hawaii is the only state that has more deaths from sharks than from lightning. Not because Hawaii has so many fatal shark attacks, but because the islands have so few thunderstorms. Allen's book is a hodgepodge, repetitive and poorly organized. But it does contain a lot of information, much of it new and some of it incorrect. Still, researchers do know more than they did only a few years ago about what sharks attack, when and where, and some of that is available here, if read carefully. But the book is unreliable in many details. For example, Allen writes that, "In Hawaii, tourists who don't know the waters are frequently the victims." Not true. It is also not true that in Hawaii "official" data on shark attacks "is highly influenced by the conflicting interests of tourist, diver, fisherman, environmental

and shark-welfare constituencies." That is because there are no "official" data. He just made that up. There is an unofficial shark attack log, maintained by a turtle researcher, because sharks attack turtles. It shows that until recently, there were NO shark attacks on tourists. It is impossible to be sure, but this apparently was because tourists stuck close to shore and most Hawaii shark attacks were out a ways. In the last 15 years or so, tourists have been attacked by sharks, probably because they are venturing farther from shore than they used to.

The title of this book is accurate; it's subtitle is not. Literally 80% of the pages in this book are near-clinical descriptions of shark attack cases around the world, separated into chapters by geography. While it's mentioned in various spots before then, the last 15 pages finally truly discuss "their causes and avoidance." This book is not without merit. First, the descriptions and circumstances of each of the attacks avoid hype and hysteria and might be entertaining if you happen to be the type that likes to watch the scene of a car wreck. Second, it theorizes that the 'test bite' hypothesis may be incorrect, as great whites and other sharks return for second (and sometimes more) bites. If you'd like to hear about various regional shark attack histories and stories about people getting their limbs torn off, it's all here. On the other hand, if you are looking for an in-depth scientific discussion on shark biology, attack behavior, and attack prevention beyond what you can find already published on most websites, there are better books out there.

This is truly a good book for anyone interested about sharks and why they attack. The book gives an almost comprehensive view of attacks from around the world. It even gives a synopsis on the sharks that seem to attack people the most. I would recommend this for anyone who is just curious about sharks, or anyone who is interested in attacks by sharks specifically.

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