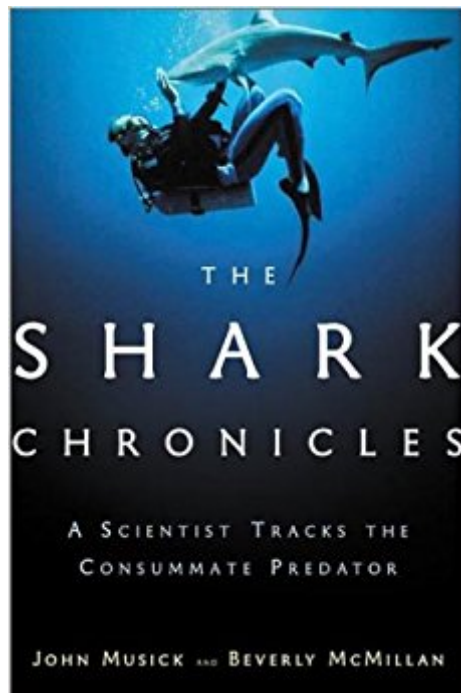




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The Shark Chronicles: A Scientist Tracks The Consummate Predator



Synopsis

Many animals elicit the same mythical terror and awe as sharks, and yet we know little about these elusive, highly engineered creatures. John A. Musick and Beverly McMillan bring us along on a thrilling adventure as they chase sharks from Bear Gulch, Montana, to a whale shark-feeding station in Okinawa, by way of Alaska, the Bimini islands, and the most sophisticated shark-research labs in the world. En route we discover that sharks navigate using electromagnetic signals, have a bloodhound's sense of smell, are both cold- and warm-blooded, and possess biochemical weapons, which, used properly, might indeed help fend off malignant tumors and microbes. Musick, who has spent over thirty years as a defender of the much-maligned shark, here excavates the mysterious lives of sharks from the dark recesses of the oceans--and raising the alarm about how fishing and industry are reducing their numbers and affecting their behavior. This captivating and educational scientific exploration challenges us to rethink our relationship with sharks, leaving us with the question: Are humans the prey, or the predator?

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Customer Reviews

Reading Musick, a Virginia Institute of Marine Science professor, and McMillan (Titanic: Fortune and Fate) is like watching a nature documentary: you're consumed not so much by storytelling as by factoids: sharks have taste buds, have been around for more than 400 million years and can be warm-blooded. Shark stomachs have turned up "license plates, carcasses of dogs, birds, and horses, and sides of rotten beef jettisoned by cruise ships. The navy occasionally finds evidence of

shark bites on its submarines." This comprehensive look at the much-feared creatures takes readers from Montana to Mexico to Malaysia, tracing the fish's development from ancient ur-shark to sea king. Musick and McMillan discuss fossil excavations and evolutionary biology, debunk the myth that shark cartilage is a cancer cure and show how the shark became a favorite media scapegoat, all while narrating their own research travels across the globe. These on-the-spot reports can seem somewhat gratuitous and, along with cheeky chapter titles like "The Carnivore Cafe" and "Sex, Sharks, and Videotape," they start to feel like a panicked and unnecessary attempt to compensate for the book's hard-science tilt. Nonetheless, Jaws junkies will eat up the fascinating shark facts sprinkled liberally through the book, and armchair naturalists will enjoy both the evolutionary perspective and the authors' look at the environmental threats facing the shark, a victim of overfishing and "recreation." It seems that even the "consummate predator" is no match for human industry. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

At last! A shark book whose basic premise is that sharks are fascinating and valuable animals to be studied, protected, and preserved. Musick, a shark researcher at Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences, and McMillan, his wife and a science writer, have given us a well-written, informative tome that covers all aspects of this greatly misunderstood group of fish, including evolution, reproductive behavior, physiology, and feeding behavior. The authors also discuss the media-hyped frenzy of 2001's "Summer of the Shark" and the very real harm this type of hysteria does to efforts to protect endangered species of sharks, including some of those that get the worst press. While the book is loaded with information, there are just enough anecdotes to capture and hold the reader's interest. Scientific terms are used, but explained, so that the reader is challenged but not discouraged by too much jargon. Unlike the recent *Shark: Stories of Life and Death from the World's Most Dangerous Waters*, this one is a definite keeper. Highly recommended for all public, college, and high school libraries. Margaret A. Rioux, MBL/WHOI Lib., Woods Hole Oceanographic Inst., MA
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I'm fascinated by sharks, and so glad I bought this book. It provides an interesting account of sharks and their evolution, and highlights how little we still know of them through first-hand accounts. It can get slightly bogged down in science for a purely casual reader, but provides a wealth of interesting information all the same. It also goes a long way toward dispelling media myths, and recognizing sharks -- with reverence and respect rather than condemnation -- for what they are: apex predators par excellence. Buy this book!

I really enjoyed this book. The authors cover shark evolution, taxonomy, behavior, natural history, biology, exploitation and conservation. They mix accounts of their own research with that of other researchers they visit in various places, including California, Baja California, Florida, and the east coast of the U.S. I took a star away as it didn't include notes, a bibliography, or illustrations of any kind. It did have an appendix with two tables illustrating shark evolution and taxonomy as well as an index.

The tales of a shark researcher and his colleagues and friends serve as the vehicle for instructing the reader on the fascinating world of the Shark. This narrative trick works in this book much better than I had anticipated, since the vignettes presented quickly depart from the story of the researchers involved and delve into the secrets of the shark they uncovered instead. And the secrets are fascinating. Shark fossils, shark senses, shark sex, shark behavior, shark attack (of course), threats to sharks and surprising data on shark intelligence are all presented in a book that breezes by too quickly. Well worth the price of admission!

This book has a ton of great information, is an easy read, and the delivery is enjoyable. If you want to get some basic and advanced information on the past, present, and future of sharks this is the book to read.

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