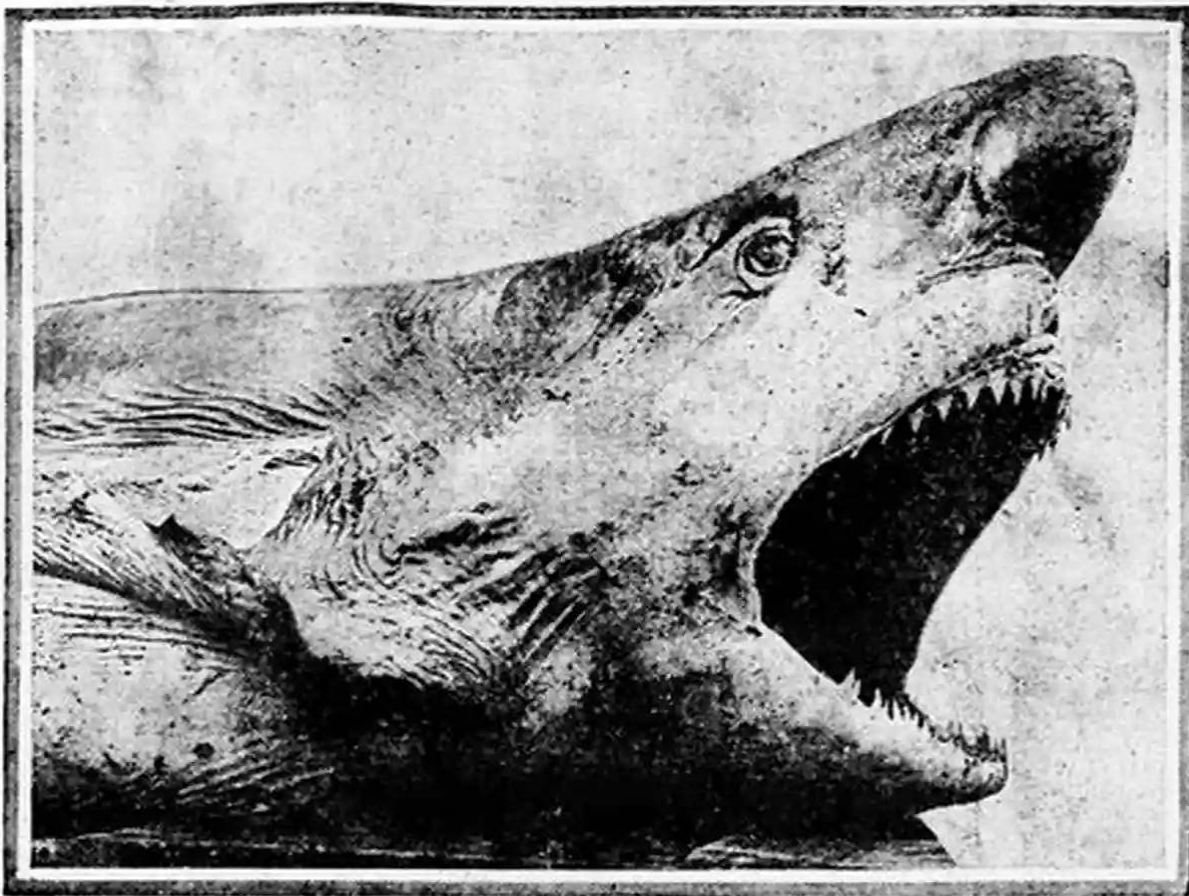


The Terrifying Shark Attacks of 1916: How Innocent Swimmers Faced Their Worst Nightmare

MAN EATING FEMALE SHARK CAUGHT OFF NEW JERSEY COAST



HEAD OF MAN-EATING SHARK

This nine and one-quarter feet man-eating shark, whose head is shown above, was caught off Belford, N. J., by Paul Parson.

When the shark was cut open, twelve baby sharks 18 inches long, were found.

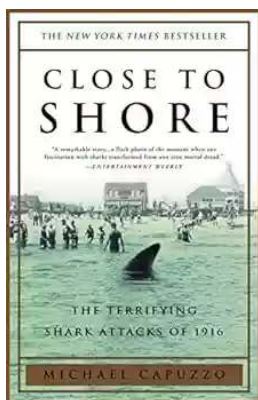
The monster which weighs two hundred and fifteen pounds, was caught in a net after a terrific battle. The shark is one of the gray variety and is of the man-eating species.

It is believed that this is only one of a shoal of man-eaters hovering close to the Jersey shore.

One summer day in 1916, on the shores of the New Jersey coast, a series of horrifying shark attacks left beachgoers paralyzed with fear and forever changed our perception of sharks. These incidents, collectively known as the "Terrifying Shark Attacks of 1916," captivated the nation and sparked a deep-seated fear of sharks that still lingers to this day.

The First Encounter: July 1, 1916

It all started innocently enough. Charles Vansant, a 25-year-old vacationer, was taking a refreshing swim near the town of Beach Haven when a massive shark attacked him. Panic-stricken, Vansant desperately fought for his life, shouting for help. Despite the efforts of onlookers who rushed to the scene, the shark managed to inflict fatal wounds on Vansant. This was just the beginning of a series of shocking events that would terrify the entire New Jersey coastline.



Close to Shore: The Terrifying Shark Attacks of 1916 by Michael Capuzzo (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 4032 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
X-Ray	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 336 pages



The Fear Spreads: July 6, 1916

Merely five days later, just 45 miles away from Beach Haven, two more victims fell prey to the vicious shark. Charles Bruder, a 27-year-old Swiss bellboy, and Lester Stillwell, an 11-year-old boy, were swimming in Matawan Creek when the shark attacked. The swift and brutal attacks sent shockwaves through the state, leaving residents in a state of absolute terror and disbelief.

The Investigation and the Aftermath

As fear gripped the Jersey Shore, authorities launched an extensive investigation to determine the identity and motives of these relentless sharks. Experts hypothesized that the culprit responsible for these tragic incidents was a wandering great white shark, drawn close to the shore due to an abundance of prey.

The relentless pursuit of these sharks by fishermen and even armed individuals became a national obsession as the panic spread further. Eventually, the shark responsible for the attacks was captured, leaving the residents heaving a collective sigh of relief. However, the scars left by these terrifying events would forever shape society's perception of sharks and swimming in open waters.

Legacy and Lessons Learned

The Shark Attacks of 1916 left an indelible mark on American history. It marked the first recorded instances of sharks attacking swimmers in the United States, and it ignited a widespread fear and fascination with these oceanic apex predators.

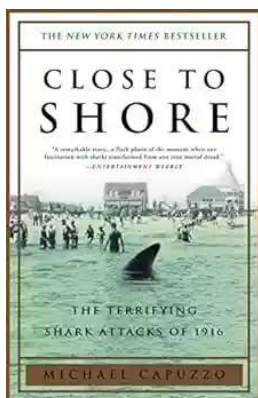
As a result of the attacks, swimming at beaches declined significantly, and shark hunting became a popular form of recreation. It was these events that partially inspired Peter Benchley's iconic novel "Jaws" and the subsequent blockbuster movie, solidifying the image of sharks as cold-blooded killers in the public consciousness.

However, it is important to note that incidents like these are extremely rare. The chances of encountering a shark in open waters and being attacked are statistically low. Understanding these creatures and respecting their habitat is imperative to maintain the delicate balance of our oceans.

The Terrifying Shark Attacks of 1916 remain a chilling reminder of the fragility of human life and the unpredictable nature of the ocean's inhabitants. From the first violent encounter with Charles Vansant to the ensuing panic and eventual capture of the culprit, these events have become a significant chapter in history's book of horrors.

While our perception of sharks may have been forever altered by the events of that summer, it is essential to approach these creatures with respect and understanding. The events of 1916 serve as an enduring reminder that the ocean is a realm where we are merely visitors, and it is our responsibility to coexist peacefully with its inhabitants.

Image Credits: [Link](#)



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Combining rich historical detail and a harrowing, pulse-pounding narrative, Close to Shore brilliantly re-creates the summer of 1916, when a rogue Great White shark attacked swimmers along the New Jersey shore, triggering mass hysteria and launching the most extensive shark hunt in history.

In July 1916 a lone Great White left its usual deep-ocean habitat and headed in the direction of the New Jersey shoreline. There, near the towns of Beach Haven and Spring Lake--and, incredibly, a farming community eleven miles inland--the most ferocious and unpredictable of predators began a deadly rampage: the first shark attacks on swimmers in U.S. history.

Capuzzo interweaves a vivid portrait of the era and meticulously drawn characters with chilling accounts of the shark's five attacks and the frenzied hunt that ensued. From the unnerving inevitability of the first attack on the esteemed son of a prosperous Philadelphia physician to the spine-tingling moment when a farm boy swimming in Matawan Creek feels the sandpaper-like skin of the passing shark, *Close to Shore* is an undeniably gripping saga.

Heightening the drama are stories of the resulting panic in the citizenry, press and politicians, and of colorful personalities such as Herman Oelrichs, a flamboyant millionaire who made a bet that a shark was no match for a man (and set out to prove it); Museum of Natural History ichthyologist John Treadwell Nichols, faced with the challenge of stopping a mythic sea creature about which little was known; and, most memorable, the rogue Great White itself moving through a world that couldn't conceive of either its destructive power or its moral right to destroy.

Scrupulously researched and superbly written, *Close to Shore* brings to life a breathtaking, pivotal moment in American history. Masterfully written and suffused with fascinating period detail and insights into the science and behavior of sharks, *Close to Shore* recounts a breathtaking, pivotal moment in American history with startling immediacy.



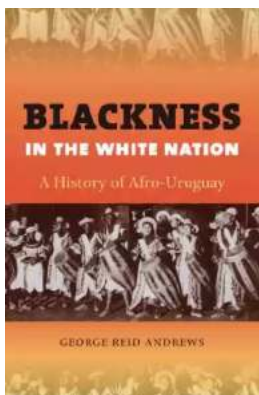
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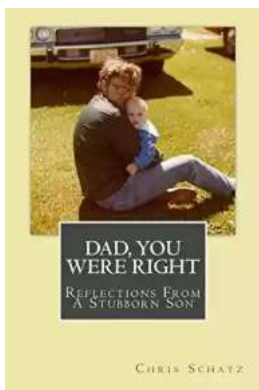
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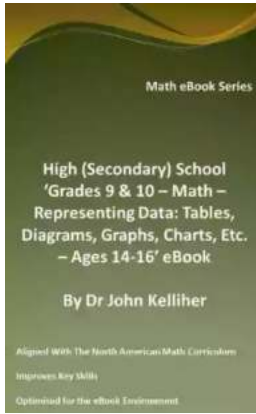
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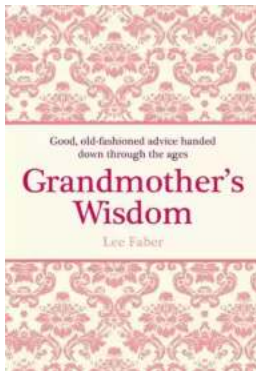
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