

Biting the hand that feeds

Description

I have always loved sharks – there is something about the majesty and mystery that surrounds them in the ocean depths that has always fascinated me. No other fish or aquatic animal has managed to capture my attention more than the shark.

Maybe it has to do that they are relics from the age of the dinosaurs, or perhaps that they come in such a variety of shapes and sizes that there is always one more to learn about. No matter the reason, when I first heard of Discovery Channel’s – Shark Week, – I was immediately drawn in. I have written about my love of Shark Week before ([see here](#)), and for the longest time, I was an avid watcher.

I admit, I wouldn’t watch everything, but I would tune in for most of it.

Over the years, however, Shark Week began to slowly drift away from the science aspect like flotsam and jetsam, idly meandering towards a more cavalier reality show-esque presentation. But I would still tune in for shows that focused on the science of these amazing creatures.

Then, like the telltale dorsal fin, I began to hear rumblings of what was coming for Shark Week 2013. Not only would there be a live show, but also a documentary about *C. Megalodon* – an extinct shark that could have measured up to 60 feet long and possessed a bite strength that could rip a car in half. *C. Megalodon* was, in every sense of the word, a giant of the deep.



Just look at those Megalodon jaws! [Source](#)

But the special, entitled –Megalodon: The Monster Shark That Lives– is the worst kind of travesty against science, education and general good taste.

[Christie Wilcox](#) and many others (including [Wil Wheaton](#)!) have written about this today, but I thought I would add my voice to the growing uproar.

The –documentary– (or mockumentary, as I will be calling it from now on), focuses on the hunt for an animal that has been extinct for millions of years. The show states that ships have gone missing,

unfossilized teeth have been found and that a whale carcass (with a giant bite in its flesh) was found. But there is not a single shred of evidence to substantiate the claims made on the show.

Now, *C. Megalodon* did exist and it was an awe-inspiring animal, and shows on the network have tackled it before. In fact, the Mythbusters built a fake *C. Megalodon* to determine just how strong it could be. And that was a great show, as it was rooted in science fact, not fiction.

The fact is that everything in the mockumentary about *C. Megalodon* was 100 per cent false – the stories, the accounts, the footage – everything. Even the scientists were paid actors.

The entire show was a gigantic lie, put on a network that prides itself on being, according to their corporate website, “the world’s #1 nonfiction media company.”

The only thing Discovery did do during the *C. Megalodon* show was flash a brief disclaimer at the end of the show that lasted for approximately four seconds. You can see it in all its concise glory on [Gawker](#).

Due to the uproar, a Discovery Channel executive producer has said a statement about how viewers feel betrayed by the network.

“With a whole week of Shark Week programming ahead of us, we wanted to explore the possibilities of Megalodon,” Michael Sorensen, executive producer of Shark Week, told FOX411 in a statement. “It’s one of the most debated shark discussions of all time, can Megalodon exist today? It’s Ultimate Shark Week fantasy. The stories have been out there for years and with 95% of the ocean unexplored, who really knows?”

Sorry Michael, but that doesn’t fly. No one says Megalodon is still alive, go ask a scientist.

This is dis-heartening, and deeply offensive to me, not only as a fan of sharks, but also as a biologist and a fan of the Discovery Channel.

I have lots of memories of watching high-quality Discovery Channel programming with my parents, sister and brother. I used to sit in front of it for hours and just sit transfixed, absorbing the knowledge, all while being entertained. Isn’t that the goal?

It got to a point that friends and family kept joking that I should get my own show about animals, like Steve Irwin (a hero of mine). And I wanted one, more than anything.

Sorry Discovery, but *C. Megalodon* has long since gone the way of the dodo, the dinosaurs and your scientific integrity.

You have lost a supporter of your network, as you have tarnished your own reputation with myth disguised as fact during a time where you can spread the word about sharks and educate people about these wondrous animals. You ripped the heart out of Shark Week – now it is just chum for the bottom feeders.

Category

1. Discovery channel
2. Megalodon

3. Shark Week

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