

The Deepest Blue

Description

The history of our planet is an interesting one, and I want to share this video that was forwarded to me by my dad. This perfectly shows where we've been, what we are and even, where we are going.

Please give it a watch:

It is incredible how far we've come and what we have done to get here.

Because of the video, I reflected on those special times of the year that bring joy, such as birthdays and anniversaries. They are mostly sprinkled throughout the year like little surprises, giving you something to look forward to.

All those are all well and good, but my favourite time of the year has a more dark twist – Discovery Channel's Shark Week!

Since 1987, Shark Week has been delighting fans and scientists alike, and I am no exception. And in its 25th anniversary, I thought I would spell out why sharks are so important to me.

I saw the movie Jaws over 20 years ago, and while my parents told me that it was ok to be scared of the water, it seemed I was immune to the fear that gripped the world shortly after its release. Sure sharks were scary (anything with that many teeth is), but I was more interested in the how and why of it all.

Why are sharks so powerful? How do they track their prey? What do they normally eat?

This lit a fire under me, and I began to learn everything I could about sharks. Granted, not a lot was known and many aspects of their life cycles still remain a bit of a mystery, but being the precocious animal-obsessed child that I was, I didn't care.

If it wasn't known, I figured I would find it out.

Hence my want to be a marine biologist.

Shortly after, I discovered I had a life-threatening allergy to fish and seafood. Suffice to say, I was not happy. It was not what a future marine biologist, who usually has to handle a lot of fish, wanted to have.

I came to terms with it however, and while my future career in the marine animal sciences was closed, my passion burned brighter. I inhaled books and documentaries about sharks with abandon, even the sequels to Jaws (which are horrible, never ever watch them), just so I could see more.

There was something about their streamlined shape, serrate teeth and unblinking eyes that transfixed me. Add in the fact that they have a sixth sense that can detect electric fields through

receptors on their noses called the ampullae of Lorenzini (in the running for one of the best names ever), who wouldn't want to learn about these animals that have been around longer than dinosaurs?

This passion for sharks and rays stayed in me even into university, where I dissected a spiny dogfish (called a dogfish, but actually a shark) and wrote a research paper on shark predation behaviour. The best part was when I presented the paper, I utilized a stuffed shark from the Jaws ride at Universal Studios in Florida I bought years back to show how the shark positions itself and the different attacks they use.

But.

No discussion of sharks and Jaws may be complete without the mention of the ruthless killing of sharks done every day in the name of sport, protecting the public or for food. Shark attacks are exceedingly rare. In fact, I am more likely to be killed in my car, crossing the street, eating a hot dog, being killed a cat, getting struck by lightning, being killed by a falling over vending machine and more.

Are we outlawing cars, vending machines or relentlessly murdering cats?
No, of course not, *that would be silly.*

So why sharks?

Yes they attack people on the rare occasion, but so do lions, tigers and bears.

Sure, they are scary, but so are snakes.

And sure, they look weird, but so does an aardvark (PLEASE do not kill aardvarks, they are amazing).

But because a movie told you so?

Please.

Even the man who wrote the book Jaws, Peter Benchley, was shocked and appalled by the killing of sharks that resulted from the movie. He spent the rest of his life diving with sharks, filming documentaries and educating the public about how beautiful, important and magical sharks are.

So the next time you sit down and watch Jaws or Deep Blue Sea, Mega shark or any other movie that makes sharks into villains, enjoy it!

But they call it the magic of the movies for a reason, and don't take it as the truth. Do your own research and you'll find out that they really are not all that scary or evil, just misunderstood.

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