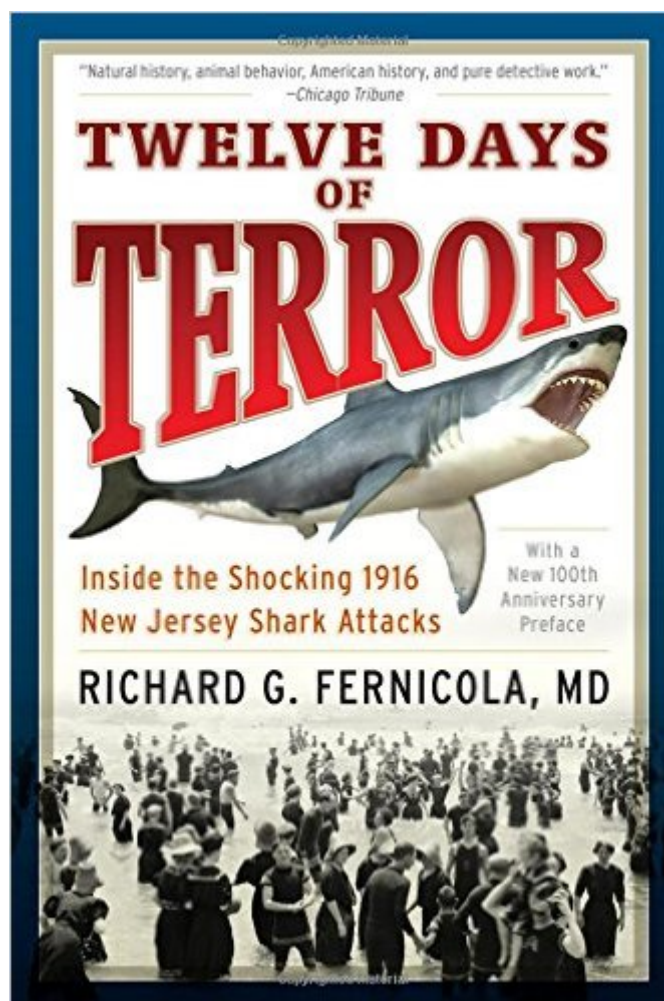


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Twelve Days Of Terror: Inside The Shocking 1916 New Jersey Shark Attacks



Synopsis

Upon the 100th anniversary of the most terrifying stretch of shark attacks in American history--a wave said to have been the inspiration for Jaws--comes a reissue of the classic account and investigation. In July 1916, a time when World War I loomed over America and New York City was in the midst of a deadly polio epidemic, the tri-state area sought relief at the Jersey shore. The Atlantic's refreshing waters proved to be utterly inhospitable, however. In just twelve days, four swimmers were violently and fatally mauled in separate shark attacks, and a fifth swimmer escaped an attack within inches of his life. In this thoroughly researched account, Dr. Richard Fernicola, the leading expert on the attacks, presents a riveting portrait, investigation, and scientific analysis of the terrifying days against the colorful backdrop of America in 1916 in *Twelve Days of Terror*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There have been many books and articles written about the 1916 New Jersey shark attacks and I have read them all; this is the most comprehensive one that shows just how diligent the writer was in his research of this event. Having lived my life on the Jersey coast and as founder and President of the New Jersey Maritime Museum (located in Beach Haven, where the first attack occurred on July 1, 1916) I am proud to carry this wonderful book in our gift shop. Kudos to Dr. Fernicola for the reissue of this masterpiece!
Deborah C. Whitcraft, President
New Jersey Maritime Museum
Beach Haven, NJ

Possibly the scariest book I've ever read, fiction or non. In comparison with the much more widely-reviewed and much-touted "Close to Shore" by Michael Capuzzo, I enjoyed "Twelve Days of Terror" much more. Whereas today so many of the most appreciated nonfiction books are those which make every attempt to have the book read like fiction, with the pace of a well-plotted novel, there's none of that here: The events and the recollections of those who were there stand on their own and are gripping and terrifying without any special tricks of the pen beyond Dr. Fernicola's extensive research. He has left no stone unturned. It's clear he spent years trying to track down contemporary interviews and firsthand recollections, and to me these are much more effective than putting thoughts into the heads of long-dead people. While this doesn't have the slick pace of "Close to Shore," this book is a workhorse, not a show pony, and I can't believe there's anything else out there that has been written about these events that features a more detailed compilation of not just the facts of the attacks and their circumstances, but the many, many other fascinating factors that could have been at play. And there's quite a bit of interesting information about a number of shark species, as well as conditions which lead to attacks, included to boot. Toward the end, the book does read a bit like someone's thesis, in that Dr. Fernicola clearly has an academic opinion on the shark and species responsible and is out to prove it, that didn't take away from my enjoyment of the book or from my choice to give it five stars.

Twelve Days of Terror This is a history of the shark attacks that occurred in July 1916. The "Introduction" provides a snapshot of that era, and there is a great selection of photographs. The advantage of the Jersey Shore was not just the cool sea breezes; it was a haven from hay-fever, and the noxious smells of the city. Page 4 tells of the attack on Charles VanSant, who went into the sea with a dog. Signs say "No Dogs on the Beach" because swimming dogs attract sharks! Academic experts considered such shark attacks as impossible in these waters. Resort owners talked down any fears of more attacks, which caused lost business. Then attacks in Matawan creek created a bigger sensation. People bought dynamite from hardware stores and threw it into the creek to kill the shark. People were warned against swimming near inlets of deep channels. Page 98 quotes statistics that minimize the chance of a shark attack: only 5 to 10 deaths each year. But another book pointed out that newspapers are more likely to report "injured while swimming" than a "shark attack". I remember the event in the summer of 1949 near Asbury Park when a young man was "injured while swimming" (no mention of a shark); he died a few days later. They are called "man eaters" because Caucasian males aged 15 to 24 years account for the vast majority of victims (p.101). This also correlates to drowning deaths. Warm-blooded sharks tend to feed on calorie-rich

fatty seals and whales; humans are nutrition-poor (p.116).1916 was the first year that sewage was piped into the coastal waters off NJ. This could feed small creatures, and the larger ones higher on the food chain. Fishermen disposed of fish parts close to shore; "chumming" is known to attract predators. Heavy rains could also wash out food for sea creatures. This may be one reason why shore resorts use holding tanks during the tourist season. Since the Marine Mammal Protection Act was passed in 1972, the number of marine mammals has increased in California, along with white shark attacks (p.262). An example of "unintended consequences"?How would the press deal with a shark attack? Since the loss of tourists means a loss of advertising revenue, any bad news could be censored. They could print articles about spotting dolphins off the beach - proof that no sharks were around (p.270). A classic example of thought-control: people would see what they were told to expect. Science does not believe in the "rogue shark" theory, although rogues occur with lions, tigers, and elephants. This behavior may be caused by an ailment. The last chapter explains why the great white shark caught off South Amboy was responsible for the attacks in Matawan creek and elsewhere.

Dr. Fernicola makes a good case for for a Great White being the one who did the deed.

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