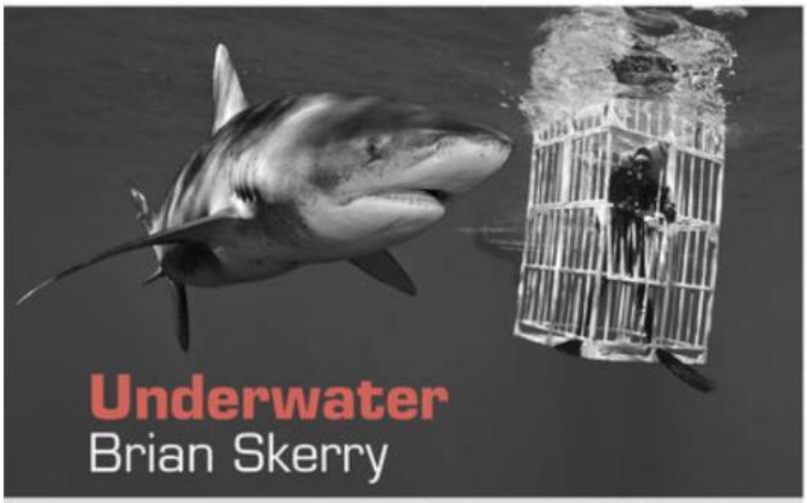


Underwater
Brian Skerry

1 Finding the oceanic whitetip shark is an experience I won't forget. This is one of the most dangerous sharks in the world, but its numbers are falling. They used to be common around the Bahamas, but most people say they haven't seen them for years. Just as we arrived there, some sports fishermen in the central Bahamas saw some oceanic whitetips when they were fishing for tuna. So I planned sixteen days to go searching for them.

For the first few days out of Palm Beach, we didn't see a thing. Then, on the fifth day, I was looking out from the bridge when I spotted a shark on the surface. The white tip of its dorsal fin was sticking out of the water, so I knew we had an oceanic whitetip. I quickly put on my wetsuit and jumped in the water. The shark was very curious about me and swam right up to me. It was about three metres long and it even stayed around while we were putting the cage in the water for the scientist. I got some great pictures! That was really the high point of the assignment.

2 At the end of the assignment, after a year of work, we were going after the great hammerhead shark. This species is so elusive that there are hardly any pictures of it. For the entire first week, the weather was appalling and it was impossible to dive. It was very frustrating. Then, on the eighth day, my assistant had to fly home because his mother was seriously ill.

Suddenly, I was working alone as well as trying to deal with the bad weather. That was definitely the worst moment on the assignment. It is so important to have a really good assistant with you. Without him there, my workload more than doubled. While I was trying to decide what to do, the weather unexpectedly improved and I got a couple of not-bad days! And on one of those days, everything clicked and I got some great pictures of a hammerhead. I was lucky.

Reading on assignment

1 Read the stories by Brian Skerry about his year-long assignment photographing sharks. Write the number of the story (1–2) next to the question. There is one extra question.

a What was one of your worst experiences covering this assignment?
b What was one of your strangest experiences covering this assignment?
c What was one of your best experiences covering this assignment?

2 These statements are true for one or both of Skerry's stories. Write W (whitetip), H (hammerhead) and B (both).

1 The sharks were difficult to find.
2 Bad weather made it almost impossible to do any work.
3 Some fishermen told Skerry where the sharks were.
4 Skerry had to work without an assistant.
5 Skerry got into the water as soon as he saw a shark.
6 The shark spent some time swimming close to Skerry.
7 Skerry wasn't sure what to do.
8 Skerry was pleased with the photos he took.

3 Find these words and expressions in the stories. Choose the correct option.

1 spotted: *photographed / saw*
2 high point: *best moment / top of the boat*
3 deal with: *survive / solve the problem*
4 workload: *amount of work you have to do / problems*
5 doubled: *increased by twice as much / increased by three times as much*
6 clicked: *was quiet / was successful*

Glossary
bridge (n) /brɪdʒ/ part of a boat or ship where the captain normally stands
dorsal fin (n) /'dɔːrsəl fɪn/ the part of a shark's back that sticks up
elusive (adj) /'ɪlusɪv/ extremely rare and difficult to see
wetsuit (n) /'wetsuːt/ rubber clothes for water sports

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