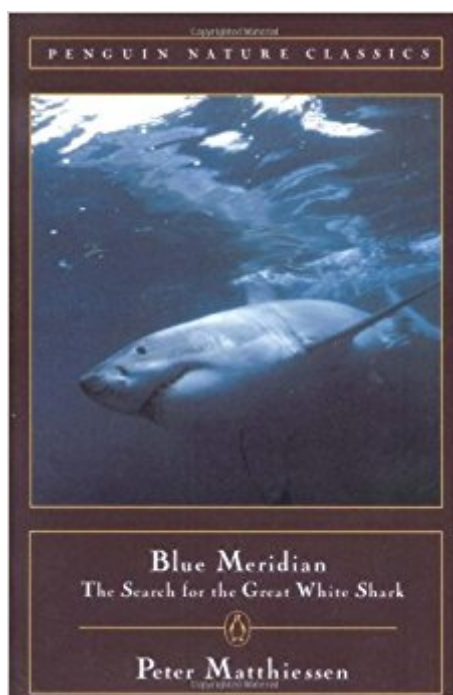


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Blue Meridian: The Search For The Great White Shark



Synopsis

A classic work of nature and humanity, by renowned writer Peter Matthiessen (1927-2014), author of the National Book Award-winning *The Snow Leopard* and the new novel *In Paradise*—National Book Award-winning author Peter Matthiessen takes readers on an expedition to find the most dangerous predator on Earth—the legendary great white shark. On a trek that lasts 17 months and takes him from the Caribbean to the whaling grounds off South Africa, and across the Indian Ocean to the South Australian coast, Matthiessen describes the awesome experience of swimming in open water among hundreds of sharks; the beauties of strange seas and landscapes; and the camaraderie, tension, humor, and frustrations that develop when people continually risking their lives dwell in close proximity day after day. Filled with acute observations of natural history in exotic areas around the world, *Blue Meridian* records a harrowing account of one of the great adventures of our time. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

Glad to see this little gem of a book has gotten a well deserved and long overdue reprinting. This is

Matthiessen's true first-person account as a crewmember during filming of the feature length documentary "Blue Water, White Death." Several years before "Jaws" made the name of the Great White Shark a household word, millionaire Peter Gimbal set out to find and film the "white death" taking with him the best underwater photographers and naturalists in the world at that time. The search took them from the whaling grounds off South Africa to the Great Barrier Reef of Australia before they caught a glimpse of the ocean's most feared creature. If you like ocean adventures, or any good story about men and women on a quest for the unknown, then Blue Meridian delivers. If you're already a fan of Matthiessen then the only question is: Why haven't you read Blue Meridian yet?

In a time when the thought of swimming with sharks was to have a death wish, five diver/photographers and one expedition historian set to the high seas in search of the elusive Great White shark. This book follows the expedition from the cold waters of South Africa, throughout the Indian Ocean, and ultimately to Dangerous Reef, South Australia in search of their quarry. Matthiessen beautifully portrays the ocean environment as one of danger and excitement. Having candid encounters with Oceanic Whitetips, hand feeding a barracuda, playing with sea lions, and finally discovering the Great White Death. This book is an excellent companion to the film "Blue Water, White Death".

It's wonderful to be able to read the narrative of shark dives from the safety and comfort of home. This is a great narrative of the expedition to search for the Great White shark...hopefully the numerous "specials" on TV and the recent article in National Geographic will help "save" this treasure of the ocean. You can't help but get involved with this book, just as exciting and fascinating as any novel. If you enjoyed this one, try Snow Leopard or Indian Country.

Blue Meridian is one of the great stories of underwater adventure and exploration. It's an account of the first substantial expedition to find and film the great white shark, and was conducted long before this type of film became routine (ala any Discovery Channel shark special). As such, not only is the reader presented with a wonderful and fast-paced story, but they are also exposed to a great deal of the (now) history of SCUBA diving and marine science. Because this was one of the first attempts to deal with sharks at close quarters, many of the techniques for filming sharks were tried for the first time during this expedition, and many of these techniques haven't been tried since (such as open-ocean swimming with feeding oceanic white-tips). There are also some charming

anachronisms, such as Peter Matthiessen describing Peter Gimble giving him the "ok" symbol; a symbol now known to every diver, but then apparently new. There's a lot to find in this book. Don't be put off by its short length.

I have very much enjoyed reading this book again and again, especially in conjunction with the film that the book describes being filmed, "Blue Water White Death", which so far as I am aware has not appeared in video form or I would surely have it in my collection by now. The film is acknowledged to be one of the better shark films in existence, and the book somewhat pales in comparison, but a worthwhile read nonetheless. I have read the hardback edition and now own the paperback. I must say I miss the color plates which are in the hardback edition. I sincerely hope someone will transfer the film to video at some point. Update 9/14/09: The movie (Blue Water, White Death) is now available on DVD!

Reading Blue Meridian on the beach in Nantucket, not far from the site of the filming of Jaws, I was encouraged that most of the book has to do with searching for, but not finding, the great white shark. In it Peter Matthiessen tells the story of the making of the film Blue Water, White Death. Quite unlike the author's masterful nature writing, this is a chronicle about a film crew traipsing around the world looking for sharks. Most of the drama deals with interpersonal interactions and the fear of failure experienced by the expedition leader, Peter Gimbel. Son of the renowned merchandising magnate, he is seeking to establish himself as a film maker. If they don't find sharks and put down commercially viable footage he won't make it out from under his father's long shadow. Here's a paragraph that conveys the kind of observation that Matthiessen sinks to in this particular work: By now everyone cares about the film, quite apart from his own investment in it, if only because everyone cares about Peter Gimbel, who has his life's work on the line. A great part of the suspense of waiting for "Big Whitey", as the near mythical ruler of these silent seas has become known, is that his failure to appear could be fatal to the film. Therefore the ship is quiet. Against these stark horizons, even the throb of hard rock music has a tinny ring. How this came to be packaged as a Penguin Nature Classic is anybody's guess. Anyway, on page 188 of 204 Whitey finally puts in an appearance. I wish he were as elusive around here. They just closed the beach at Chatham on Cape Cod as a result of repeated sightings great whites, apparently preying on grey seals in the area. I guess I'll pass on the swim. And you may want to pass on this book. Read The Snow Leopard or The Cloud Forest instead.

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