

What it Feels Like Diving with Lots of Sharks

Text and Image by **Anita Verde and Peter Marshall**

It was only on our sixteenth dive that we first saw something bigger than ourselves in the ocean. We had descended to the “Cathedral” in the clear warm waters of Fiji, the perfect place for us as new divers to have our first “real” shark encounter. It wasn’t long

before that feeling arose. It’s hard to explain, but every diver knows it – the feeling that something much bigger than you is near, but you can’t yet see it.

Soon, a number of dark shadows emerged, slinking their way through the water column.

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Their shape and colossal size soon revealed their identity as not one, but six “friendly” Fiji tiger sharks. Our hearts, which were calm moments earlier, began beating faster, and although our breathing quickened, surprisingly we felt far more inquisitive than

we felt alarmed. We soon worked out that these feelings were not feelings of fear, but rather feelings of attraction. As the tiger shark’s sixth sense took grip, their curiosity increased, bringing them within touching distance – above, in front, and behind us. Their movements were precise and graceful as they were drawn to our electromagnetic field. But they weren’t the only sharks there. With more testosterone than a football team, twenty bull sharks lurked in the back stalls. It was at this very moment that we realised that feelings of fear and attraction are so similar that sometimes it’s impossible to tell them apart, and in fact, we wanted the sharks to come even closer.

Since that day, we are left mesmerised by these impressively engineered creatures and have sought to dive with as many different shark species in as many different scenarios as possible. Whether we’re diving with the most formidable and famous of all sharks, the great white – famous at least for bad movie appearances – or the swift and agile apex predators of our reef ecosystems, the reef sharks, sharks continue to cast a spell on us, leaving us with feelings that linger long after each encounter ends.

For us, being underwater with lots of sharks instilled a deep sense of tranquillity, delight, privilege, awe, and respect. So when we dive with sharks, we don’t hum the Jaws theme, but rather think of how scary it will be if there are no longer any sharks.



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Anita Verde and Peter Marshall have a passion for the planet’s wild places, and through their images and narratives hope to inspire better appreciation and protection of the natural world. Based in Melbourne, Australia, they have professional backgrounds in tourism strategy, environmental sustainability, and government relations. When they are not underwater or on a mountaintop, they also work professionally as strategic consultants, advising governments and industry on sustainable destination planning and development, investment attraction, government relations, brand strategy and marketing. Read more about them at www.summitstoseasphotography.com.

Reef sharks at
North Horn Osprey
Reef Australia

