

# Anthrozoology and Public Perception of Humans and Great White Sharks (*Carcharodon carcharias*) on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, USA

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## Author

O'Toole, Jessica Marie

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## Abstract

Anthrozoology is a relatively new field of study in the world of academia. This discipline, which includes researchers ranging from social studies to natural sciences, examines human-animal interactions. Understanding what affect these interactions have on a person's perception of a species could be used to create better conservation strategies and policies. This thesis uses a mixed qualitative methodology to examine the public perception of great white sharks on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. While the area has a history of shark interactions, a shark related death in 2018 forced many people to re-evaluate how they view sharks. Not only did people express both positive and negative perceptions of the animals but they also discussed how the attack caused them to change their behavior in and around the ocean. Residents also acknowledged that the sharks were not the only problem living in the ocean. They often blame seals for the shark attacks, while also claiming they are a threat to the fishing industry. The results of this study can be used to determine future strategies and policies as Cape Cod continues to navigate the increasing shark population.

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Great white sharks hunt seals in the shallow water at this beach. People have been seriously injured or killed by sharks along this coastline." It is a little less than two miles north of here at Wellfleet's Newcomb Hollow Beach that 26-year-old Arthur Medici was attacked and killed by a great white while boogie boarding last September. His death represented the only fatal shark attack in the United States last year and the first such death in Massachusetts since 1936. Cape Cod embraced the notoriety, making the animal something of a mascot: the great white appears on T-shirts and shop signs and regular screenings of Jaws are held during the summer. In Massachusetts, you can even get the apex predator on your license plate. Great white sharks, *Carcharodon carcharias* (Linnaeus, 1758), aka white sharks, white pointers, blue pointers, man-eaters, manila sharks, have, according to E. O. Wilson "... rightfully been called a top carnivore, a killing machine, the last free predator of man—the most frightening animal on earth." This common perception of white sharks is changing though as we learn more about these increasingly threatened sharks, some courageous explorers have not only free-dived with these "killing-machines," they lived to talk about it. Not that free-diving with white sharks is recommended, but these bold e A great white shark stunned a whale-watching group off the coast of Massachusetts on Sunday when the ocean predator was spotted feasting on the carcass of a dead whale. Multiple Cape Cod beaches were closed temporarily on Sunday after nearly a dozen sharks were confirmed in waters off the coast, the Boston Globe reported. Get a daily look at what's developing in science and technology throughout the world. Arrives Weekly. Subscribe. The great white shark *Carcharodon carcharias* is a highly active apex predator with the most wide- ranging distribution among fishes (Compagno 2001). As a pelagic ram-ventilating endothermic. great white shark reaches over 2.4 meter above the water surface, targeting e.g. Cape fur seals. *Arctocephalus pusillus*, are commonly observed and well documented in South Africa (Martin & Hammerschlag 2012, Fallows et al. Body length measurements were taken off the great white shark by placing a metric tape on the. floor and the shark's pectoral or dorsal fins on top not disrupting the measurement. To make sure. 6. the measurement started at the snout tip a specially designed freestanding board was used inserted.