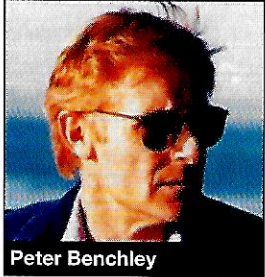


Q&A

Reality Bites

Media hype and unwarranted fears create *Shark Trouble*.

The 1975 movie *Jaws* and its surrounding media hype so scared the public that 27 years later, some people still won't go in the water. The hype still exists, but according to author Peter Benchley, it's the sharks that ought to be scared. In his first nonfiction book, *Shark Trouble*, Benchley draws on scientific facts to counter the sensationalism and provide a thought-provoking look at these fascinating animals.



Peter Benchley

RSD: Do you feel guilty

about writing *Jaws*?

PETER BENCHLEY: No, I don't. I didn't create the fear of sharks, it's been around since the dawn of time. The portrait of the shark (in the book) was as accurate as it could be, considering the knowledge that existed 30 years ago. That said, however, I could not—would not—write *Jaws* today, considering all that's been learned in the last quarter-century.

RSD: Do people really need to be scared about shark attacks?

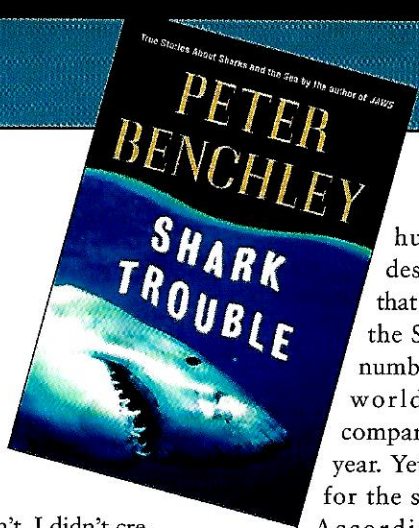
PB: We should be afraid of sharks half as much as sharks should be scared of us. For every human being killed by a shark, roughly 10 million sharks are killed by

humans. Last year, despite media claims that it was the "Year of the Shark," the actual number of shark attacks worldwide was down compared to the previous year. Yet it was a bad year for the shark population. According to the Shark Research Institute, up to 100 million sharks were killed by humans last year.

RSD: How do you feel about the recent bans on shark-feeding dives?

PB: I think the blanket banning of shark-feeding enterprises is overkill. Some of them are conducted very responsibly, and they raise the public's consciousness about sharks as vital members of the marine food chain. I don't see why standards and regulations can't be established and enforced on a case-by-case basis.

—SCOTT D. JONES



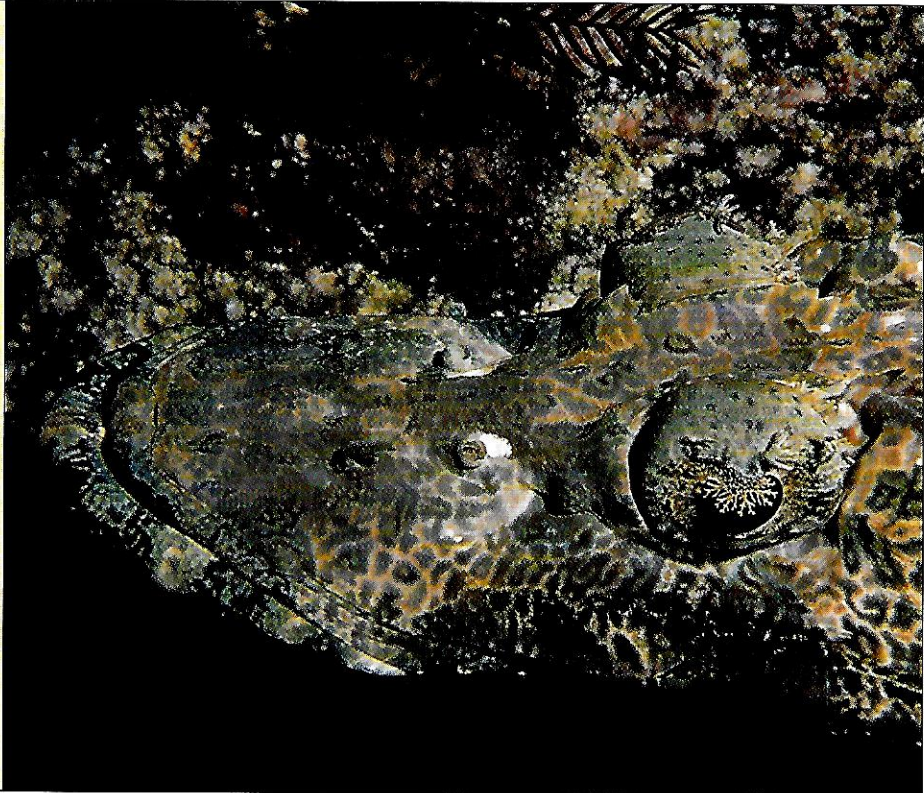
FISH FACTS

You Can Hide Your Lying Eyes

Crocodile fish use camouflage to ambush prey.

Text and photography by Lance Leonhardt

Ambush predators like the crocodile fish (*Cymbacephalus beauforti*) live and die on their ability to hide amid their surroundings. Relying on a color pattern that blends with the sand and rubble of shallow Western Pacific reefs, the crocodile fish perches motionless, snatching unsuspecting fish and crustaceans as they wander within range of its formidable jaws. To better hide its bulging eyes from both prospective prey and the glaring sun, the crocodile fish deploys branched, tassel-like flaps that can expand or contract to serve as eye shades.



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