




**Above:** An 11-foot male, probably new to the Guadalupe habitat, comes in close to inspect my cage, and briefly shows the camera his sleek, efficient contour.

## DESTINATION: guadalupe island

**Dawn in the Pacific, 115 miles off the Baja California coast:** A group of us on the chilly foredeck of the 80-foot trawler *Horizon* are stirring early, sipping hot coffee, eager to make landfall on a remote spike of volcanic rock called Guadalupe Island. Up ahead, in the flat, dark water of the island's northern inlet, another creature is also stirring, and everyone on board is thinking about it.

It is *Carcharodon carcharias*, the great white shark, and the inshore waters of Guadalupe are among its few known migratory habitats. The great white is the world's largest predatory fish. A typical adult is 13 to 16 feet long, with proportionate girth measured in meters, and a body weight generally between 1500 and 2500 pounds. He is the supreme iteration of an "apex predator," and the undisputed king of the cartilage-spined fishes

who've lived in our seas for 400 million years.

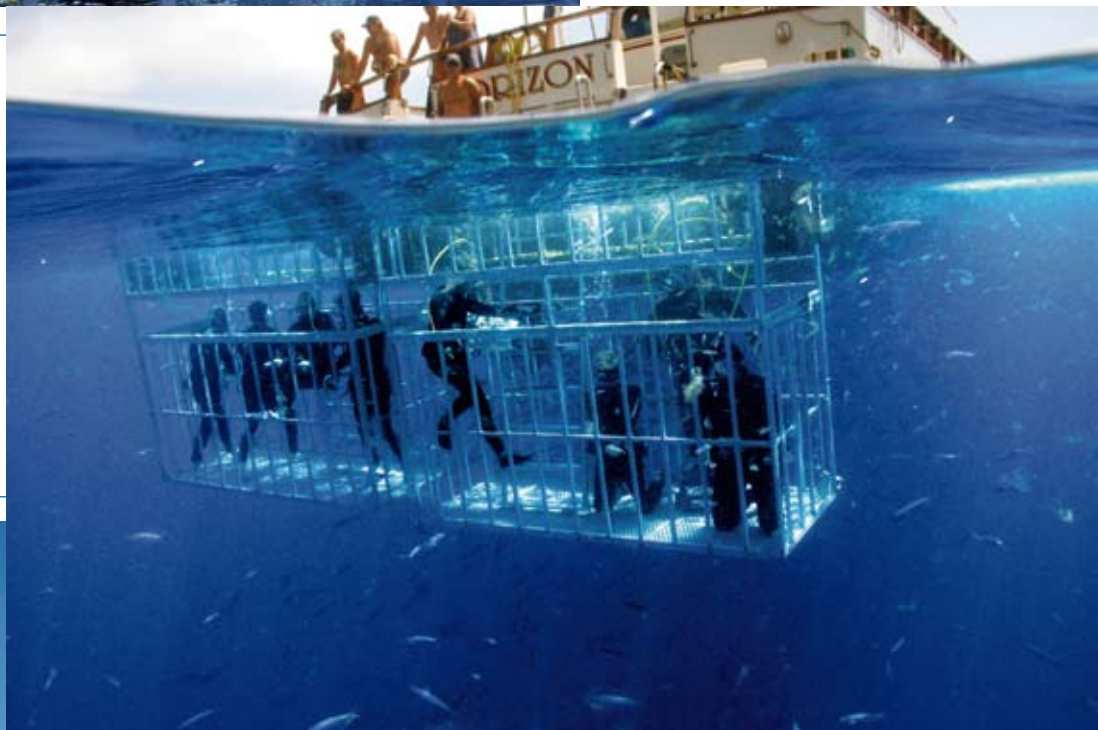
Calculating hunters, coy in their breeding and migratory habits, and stunningly efficient killers, great whites are a feast of complex behaviors to scientists and shark devotees. To a photographer with the opportunity to observe this ancient life form in the wild, the sight of a massive white shark gliding silently past your viewfinder is a life-changing moment. Here are a few brief glimpses of this ongoing adventure, under the aegis of San Anselmo, California-based Shark Diver and *Horizon Charters* of San Diego, both leading operators of shark-cage excursions to the lair of the great white. 

*Jim Cornfield is a commercial photographer and travel writer based in Malibu Canyon, CA. He's a veteran certified scuba diver and a passionate campaigner for great white shark conservation and coral reef preservation.*



A crewman assists marine biologist Luke Tipple, Shark Diver's Director of Operations, into Horizon's shark cage for a video shoot. Tipple, along with Shark Diver CEO Patric Douglas, is an ardent, successful advocate for shark conservation. His most recent program, "Shark Free Marinas," is dramatically impacting the irresponsible harvesting of sharks by sportfishermen and poachers.

The white shark's view of cage divers off the stern of MV Horizon. Despite the name of this increasingly popular form of ecotourism, participants are not required to be certified scuba divers. Although breathing is done via scuba regulators attached, hookah style, to a topside air supply, the divers are never beyond a couple of feet from the surface. The cages are welded aluminum and each one hour "rotation" is supervised by Dive-master Martin Graf, seen above, topside, with his crew. This shot was made at the water's surface with a Nikon D90 and 12-24mm zoom lens inside a Sea & Sea housing equipped with a dome port.



Horizon skipper Spencer Salmon throws a "hangbait" astern to attract great whites up from their cruising depths of 30 feet and deeper. Light for photography is obviously better near the water's surface. The baits consist of mostly tuna heads and other fish byproducts. They're intentionally cast wide of the cage bars to avert dangerous bar-bending collisions with these extraordinarily fast-moving animals.



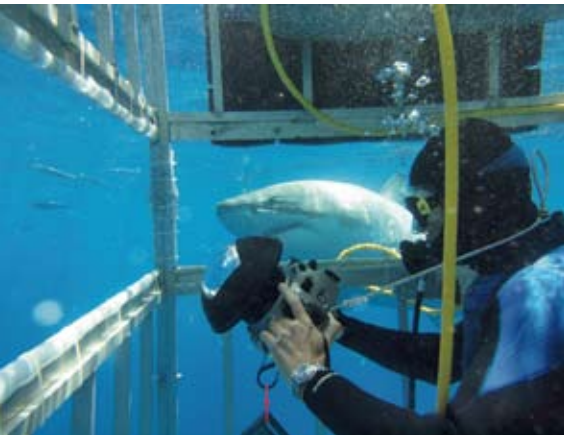
ALL PHOTOS COPYRIGHT © JIM CORNFIELD

For booking and schedules of white shark cage dive excursions: visit <http://sharkdiver.com> or [www.horizoncharters.com](http://www.horizoncharters.com). Underwater camera rentals are available through Horizon Charters, or in the San Diego area, consult <http://www.divespots.com/scuba/site-san-diego/destDiveShops.info>.



A regular Guadalupe visitor, affectionately named Bruce by local researchers, makes a close, silent inspection of me and my fellow cage divers—partly out of curiosity and presumably to size up our edibility quotient. Though we can only see him, his sensory array is capable of not only seeing, but hearing, smelling and feeling our every body movement and the electrical impulses of our beating hearts.

Seen close up in mid-attack, this shark's rippling flesh reveals the speed of its attack. The intimate dental perspective tells the rest of the story. Millions of years of evolution have gone into producing this astonishingly adept predator.



My dive companion, shark photographer Alberto Ricchi, readies a shot of the hefty great white rising suddenly beside our cage. First sightings like this are often announced by the dramatic underwater bassdrum soundtrack of another diver pounding the alert against a cage bar.

### NOTE ON PHOTOGRAPHS:

Topside photos were all made with a Canon EOS-1Ds Mark II. With the exception noted in the caption, all underwater photography was shot with the Olympus E-620 DSLR and 11–22mm zoom lens, using a PT-E06 underwater housing.