

DIVERS HELPING DIVERS®

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**BREATHLESS  
ON THE BOTTOM**  
DAN examines  
out-of-air situations

**EXPEDITION:  
THE BRITANNIC**  
Part 2 in the series

**DIVING AND  
PREGNANCY**  
What are the risks?

## Guadalupe Isn't Always Harmonious

### Dear DAN:

Congratulations on another fine issue of *Alert Diver*. As always, your magazine combines such interesting and diverse topics as medical and first aid issues, travel advice and natural history, producing a thoroughly informative and entertaining periodical.

In your November/December 2006 edition, we found the David Haas article on the great white sharks of Guadalupe Island to be extremely interesting. While we respect the opinion and observations of the author and those of many others who have visited this special place to witness the spellbinding majesty of one of the ocean's most magnificent predators, our experience is somewhat different from that of Mr. Haas.

During our expedition to Guadalupe Island in October 2005, we witnessed firsthand a predatory attack on an elephant seal by a great white shark. The attack occurred near dusk on a warm, calm evening. We were aboard a dive boat ... that operates out of San Diego, Calif.

As most of the passengers and crew prepared for dinner after a successful day of shark-cage diving, a few of us noticed a sizeable splash a few hundred yards off the port side of the boat. While most who saw this were not certain what caused the splash, a few reported they caught a fleeting glimpse of the back of a shark. Others said they saw as tail fly out of the water.

Through binoculars we could see a large circular stain expanding on the surface. We could see a bleeding carcass floating in the water and that a large shark was swimming nearby. At the time, we were anchored a few hundred yards off Prison Beach.

Within minutes, we pulled anchor and the boat moved closer to the bleeding carcass. As we approached, we could easily see a large slick of crimson red blood spreading over the surface of the water. The seal, estimated between 200 and 300 pounds,

was clearly dead, and from the size, was thought to be a juvenile. Incredibly, only the upper portion of the body remained. The lower third was completely gone.

Suddenly, we saw the shadowy outline of a great white shark, perhaps 14 feet long. The crew of the *Seeker* noticed a long, dark scar running down its left posterior flank. Later in the season, we identified this shark again and determined it was a male.

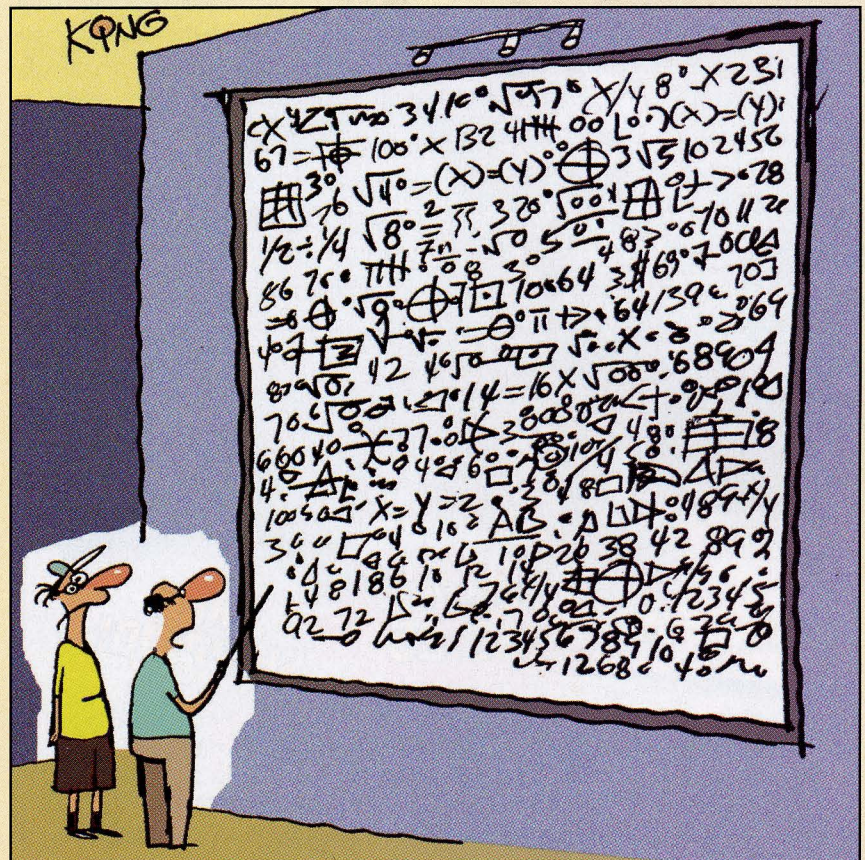
Interestingly, the shark positioned itself between the seal carcass and us. As the 95-foot boat moved closer, this shark showed no fear. It was not going to give up its prey willingly. In fact, the shark came up and bumped the bow of the boat, as if it were warning us to stay away.

As we floated next to the scene of this predatory attack, we watched in awe as the shark began to consume the remainder of

the seal. It consumed the entire carcass in 20 to 30 minutes. Then the shark disappeared into the inky-black water off Guadalupe Island. The only remaining evidence of the attack was the floating blood slick that slowly dispersed into the darkness.

According to the crew and in support of Haas' article, this was the first observed seal killing they had ever witnessed at Guadalupe. Still, it was a definite attack, and this may contradict some of Haas' observations that great white sharks and pinnipeds of Guadalupe co-exist in harmony and mutual respect. It must be a wary and tenuous co-existence that these two great species of the world's oceans enjoy at Guadalupe Island.

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***“And that, in simple terms, is what happens if you come up from your dive too quickly. Any questions?”***