

Hunters of the deep

There's nothing quite as emotive
as the dorsal fin of a shark –
that unmistakable black triangle
– rising slowly out of the sea.

No matter how many
times you see it, the
sight of an enormous
great white shark
taking to the air is
simply breathtaking.
It's rare, however, to
photograph a perfectly
vertical breach.



The great white symbolises a quintessential beauty with modern-day refinement.

Chris Fallows



For some it's their greatest fear, but for Chris and Monique Fallows it is the beginning of another encounter with a species to which they have dedicated their lives. For more than two decades, they have documented great white shark behaviour, particularly around Seal Island in False Bay near Cape Town.

'Powerful, graceful and with an ease of movement few creatures on Earth can rival,' Chris writes in a new book, 'the great white symbolises a quintessential beauty with modern-day refinement. When one of these pied torpedoes angles upward from the deep with its snow-white belly catching the dappled sunlight, it's truly a magnificent sight.'

What's different about the whites of False Bay is their tendency to become airborne. Hunting seals or just jumping – could it be for joy? – these great creatures have become the stars of the world's natural history documentaries. >

LEFT: To their last breath, seals fight back. This one is biting the shark as its captor hangs in mid breach.

BELOW: With powerful thrusts of its tail against razor-sharp teeth, this young seal escapes the jaws of death by a whisker.





In case you ever wondered about the size of the creature beneath the well-known triangle of a shark's fin....

The area around Seal Island is undoubtedly one of the world's most dangerous places for seals, but they're not merely helpless victims of merciless hunters. Seals are formidable hunters in their own right, up near the top of the food chain. It's not uncommon to see sharks with seal teeth marks and parallel gashes from their sharp tails. But in speed and size, the great whites eventually have the advantage.

'Each year, Monique and I witness many tear-jerking events,' writes Chris. 'We love both shark and seal, having over the years become embroiled in both their worlds. Sometimes nature can be brutal and, to understand the whole picture, this brutality needs to be reflected too.'

'It's no use showing only happy seals and pretty pictures. Seal Island is all about predation: a life and death struggle.'



□ *Great White and Eminent Grey* by Chris Fallows is published by Art Publishers. It costs R395.