

BJÖRN PERSSON

# BEAUTY WILL SAVE THE WORLD

INTRODUCTION BY RICHARD LOUV  
FOREWORDS BY OCEAN RAMSEY AND SIMON CLINTON  
AFTERWORD BY JAMES MWENDA

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# WITHOUT BEAUTY WE HAVE NOTHING TO LIVE FOR

When we enter these photographs, we enter beauty. Lines from a traditional Navajo prayer come to mind:

*In beauty I walk / With beauty before me I walk / With beauty behind me I walk  
/ With beauty above me I walk / With beauty around me I walk...*

Björn Persson uses his camera to find beauty, but he goes beyond the image. With it, he fights destruction of habitat, biodiversity collapse and extinction of our family of animals. So often, our connection with other-than-human beings is communicated as data, which is essential but not enough. The Australian eco-philosopher Glenn Albrecht holds that any successful movement requires »a shift in the baseline of emotions and values.« Only the power of relationship can transform facts into action. Only love can protect the children of all animals. Only the survival of other species can save us. The animals in these pages, even the most social among them, can know solitude. But the deepest loneliness is a human domain.

We are desperate to feel that we are not alone in the universe.

Our isolation is exacerbated by technology, poorly designed cities, and political and religious tribalism.

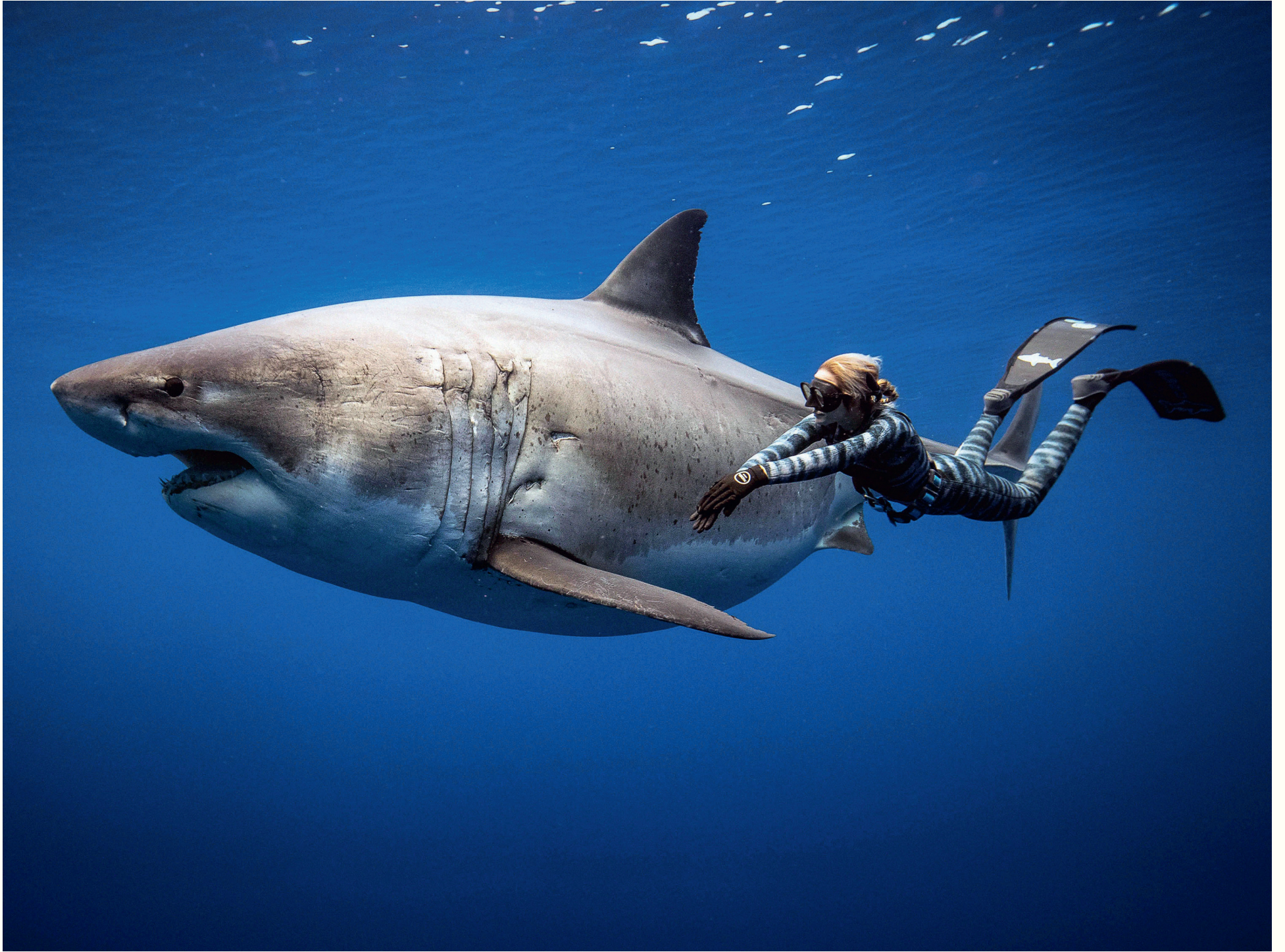
But this isolation is rooted in our loneliness as a species. By denying our bond with other animals, we deny each other. Yet all around us, we can hear the constant song of life communicating with itself, if we pay attention. When we walk in beauty, we enter a parallel ecology. When in true communion, we enter the habitat of the heart – that whisper of recognition between beings when time seems to stop, when space assumes a different shape. In that moment we sense a shared soul.

This is the place where Björn Persson can be found walking.

**RICHARD LOUV**

AUTHOR OF »THE NATURE PRINCIPLE« AND »OUR WILD CALLING«









# HOW THE BEAUTY OF NATURE CHANGED ME

**M**Y FIRST SNOW LEOPARD was unforgettable. The sun was going down over the mountains, and the temperature dropped to -20° degrees Celsius. I was just about to give up and head back to my camp when it suddenly appeared, the *Ghost of the Himalaya*. You have to be very lucky to see this elusive cat in the wild, but here it was, sitting on a rock less than a hundred meters away. I took some quick photos, but my desire to just watch in undisturbed awe to cherish that moment made me put down my camera. My emotions took over and I could hardly hold back my tears. This was undoubtedly the best moment of my life as a photographer.

The memory of its awe-inspiring beauty has stayed with me ever since. When I close my eyes I can still see it in detail. His ice blue eyes and unaffected grace. In many ways this moment changed me forever. I started reflecting on the world and what we are doing to it.

Since the birth of mankind we have ravaged this planet, behaved as if there was no tomorrow. In less than 40 years we have wiped out more than 60% of all wildlife, it's only now that we are seeing the full picture and understanding the cost of our ruthless behavior. How can we allow so much beauty to disappear right in front of our eyes and without lifting a finger to try to save it?

I believe that the reason for this blinkered destruction depends on our loss of connection. The modern world has made the gap between man and the natural world so big that we are not even aware of what we are about to lose forever, and what you don't see, you don't care about.

Despite the situation we find ourselves in, I don't believe in showing the horrors or trying to scare people to react. When the negativity becomes too overwhelming, I think we act in the opposite way. Instead of engaging, we turn away from the problem. It's only human. But in that sense, despair and inaction is equally harmful to the planet as poaching and carbon dioxide.

On the contrary, I believe we need optimism. A flicker of hope, otherwise we will give up. I don't mean that we should be naive and ignore the alarming reports. But motivation is equally important as science and facts.

That's why I have devoted my life to show the beauty of what remains, and thereby inspire people to care and act. I thought that if I could only share a fraction of all the incredible places and things I have seen, I then hoped that the positive response would be much stronger and deeper. This way of communicating a crucial issue has been my method ever since.

Saving the environment is a massive challenge. Perhaps the biggest one in the history of mankind. But it is clear that science alone won't do the trick. Diagrams, statistics and scientific research is not enough to touch and move people on an emotional level. It's just as important to find ways to touch the minds of people and to create true and genuine engagement for the preservation of our planet and what an environmental meltdown means.

In that sense, it's not just up to the scientists and the politicians to address this important issue. There is a big difference between information and communication. Every artist, musician, poet or person with the ability to touch people's hearts need to translate this science into emotions, and we all have a responsibility to motivate and inspire each other so as not to end up in that deep dark hole of despair.

This book is my contribution to that mission. However dark the horizon may look, there is also so much beauty left to protect. And we must never give up on it. I hope that my photos will speak to your heart and inspire you to make a difference, however small it may be. The first step towards change is out of the door and into the wild. Only once we reconnect with nature will we start to value and appreciate its amazing beauty. Only then will we find a true desire to care for and protect it.

**BJÖRN PERSSON**