Dear Ms. Goldberg,

I am a freelance writer and National Geographic reader who would love to write a story for your magazine. I am an avid fan of National Geographic and admire the goal of exploring and protecting the planet. Your research, education, conservation, and exploration inspire me everyday.

After reading the article “Why Great White Sharks Are Still a Mystery to Us” by Erik Vance last year, it inspired me to do some research on the most feared animal in the ocean. As it turned out sharks, not just great whites, are becoming more and more scary to beach goers.

Shark attacks in the United States and Australia have been increasing and no one has an answer as to why this is happening. I thought your readers might be interested in a feature about the increasing number of shark attacks.

It is important to understand why these animals are coming so close to shore and what people can do to protect themselves when they go in the water.

I have read studies done by Dr. Daryl McPhee, an associate professor of environmental sciences at Bond University in Queensland, Australia and research done by Dr. Greg Skomal, an accomplished marine biologist with a focus in sharks from the United States who studies sharks in Massachusetts.

Please let me know if you are interested in reading a copy of “Shark in the water!” If you are of any interest of this story or would like to see other work I have done, please feel free to reach out and ask.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Tess Atkins

**Shark in the Water!**

Sharks lurking the waters beneath your kicking feet, but why are they there and what is there motive?

Abe McGrath, a 35-year-old man from Suffolk Park, was out for a morning surf at Iluka Beach when he was attacked by a great white shark.

At 6:30 a.m. McGrath was struck from underneath his board flinging him into the air and leaving him with a surfboard that was snapped in half. 50 meters away from McGrath was another surfer, Elijah Colbey. Colbey saw McGrath skimming across the water and yelling his name. He immediately started to paddle over to McGrath to assist him back to shore.

Sources say that McGrath is the, “luckiest man on earth.” Suffering from only a few stitches on his hip and an x-ray, McGrath feels very lucky he was able to walk away from the attack himself and also very lucky to be alive.

Experts Dr. Daryl McPhee of Queensland, Australia and Dr. Greg Skomal of Massachusetts in the United States have been researching the increased amount of shark attacks on the beaches that are the most popular destinations for beach goers.

Australia has a recorded 36 unprovoked shark attacks with one fatal in 2016 and a recorded 107 shark attacks and bites in 2016 in the United States. As the years go on, the number is getting higher.

Every year there are over 70 shark attacks reported worldwide. In 2016 there were four fatalities worldwide and 58 percent of these shark attacks were on surfers. Majority of these attacks happened in the United States, however Australia has the highest number of fatal shark attacks in the world. Western Australia has become the deadliest place in the world for shark attacks.

Scientists struggle to answer the question of why this is happening. Research is still going on and will continue to happen until there is an answer and a way to keep humans safe.

From the world wide known movie, “Jaws,” for years sharks have had a scary reputation to people everywhere. However, the nightmare of Jaws is becoming more and more apparent today.

Dr. Daryl McPhee, an associate professor of environmental sciences at Bond University and Dr. Blake Chapman of University of Queensland conducted a research to get down to the bottom of why shark attacks are increasing in Australia. Their research gives insight to the long-term trends in shark bites and the potential drivers for the attacks.

In the study, they talk about the six global hotspots which are places around the world that shark attacks are most likely to occur. However, based on the research that was conducted, only five of these hotspots show that the number of unprovoked shark attacks is increasing. These hotspots are Australia, South Africa, Brazil, and Reunion Island in the Bahamas.

“We need to be clear that unprovoked shark bite is a complex phenomenon,” Dr. McPhee said. This phenomenon is including several different shark species and a large amount of human activities.

As the sun hits your splashed skin and you paddle out passed the impact zone, you begin to feel invincible. Watching other surfers tear it up while you bob up and down in the water with your legs hanging from either side of the board when all of a sudden, as you look down beneath the blue clear water, a big dark creature lurks below your board and in that instant the fear of that creature being a shark is coming true.

The six hotspots are showing a rapid increase in shark attacks. The United States is seeing a suspiciously high amount of sharks passing through the waters of Massachusetts. Shark expert, Dr. Greg Skomal, has been studying shark migration patterns to try and get an answer to the frightened beach goers.

Known for it’s beautiful beaches and lovely beach town, Chatham, Massachusetts brings vacationers to the shore every year in hope to catch a glimpse of a great white shark.

Dr. Skomal said that there is an increasing number of younger sharks in this area, meaning there is a growing population. This means that swimmers coming into contact with these sharks is becoming more likely.

“It’s not if, it’s when, in terms of somebody being fatally attacked,” said Dr. Skomal. Another factor that is drawing great whites close to the shore is the increase seal population in Cape Cod. Surfers or paddle boarders who paddle into these seal colonies are putting themselves at great risk.

In an effort to keep the beach goers of Chatham at ease Dr. Skomal said, “How long does it stay and where is it trying to go are the questions we are trying to answer.”

The ocean as we know it is becoming more and more of a mystery to us. With growing populations of sharks, environmental complications, and increased human activity there still is no solid answer as to why there is an increase of shark attacks at the six hotpots.

There are precautions that can be taken to keep both sharks and beach goers safe. Tagging sharks to get a better idea of habitat use can help scientists study where these sharks are going and why. There are also foundations that are being provided for swimmers and sharks, for example the nets that are placed ways from the shore to keep sharks out of the swimming areas.

Dr. Greg Skomal has been watching the beaches from a helicopter to scope out sharks. “If they spot a shark in the swimming area, we’ll close the beach,” Dr. Skomal said.

Both Dr. Greg Skomal and Dr. Daryl McPhee are confident that there will be answers soon to everyone’s questions. It will just take time and research to come up with these answers.

Swimming cautiously and knowing the area you are swimming will help greatly to lower the number of increased shark attacks.

It is possible to live in a world where sharks and humans can co-exist and both enjoy the freedom that the ocean provides. With shark attacks on the rise worldwide, especially in the United States and Australia, knowing that scientists are working to keep you and the other beach goers safe will hopefully put your mind at ease.