All photos were taken with a Nikon D500 camera, Tokina 10-17mm lens, Nauticam housing, Inon Z-330 strobes.

Photo 1. (right) The black silhouette of the great white shark emphasizes the ethereal warmth of the oceanic sunset. Exposure: ISO 200, f/14, 1/125s, FL 17.

Photo 2. (below) These lemon sharks, against a black background, emphasize depth of field and shades of color. Exposure: ISO 200, f/11, 1/125s, FL 10.

Photo 3. (far right) Lemon shark with jaws wide open evokes primal fear, especially against a black background. Exposure: ISO 320, f/11, 1/160s, FL 10.

Photo 4. (top right) The very subtle coloring of this tiger shark is accentuated by the black background. Exposure: ISO 200, f/11, 1/125s, FL 17.

A Splash of Black — A Splash of Color

Text and photos by Gary Rose, MD

I often enjoy using subtle coloring to emphasize the feelings I experience when I witness the beauty and majesty within the sea. I have also found that on many occasions, when I combine muted coloring with black, I am able to add an additional layer of visual information that augments the successful capture of the emotion I felt at the exact moment I witnessed the scene. Later, when viewing my photos, the nuances of color and black evoke the same feelings and responses I experienced when I originally took the photo.

I utilize soft colors to magnify what I feel at the very instant I capture a silhouette. In Photo 1, the entire photo tells a story. The soft greens merging into soft blues, a little bit of copper reflection on the baitfish and the cathedral lighting demonstrate the ethereal warmth of an oceanic sunset. The black silhouette of the great white shark slowly disappearing into the curtain of subtle color adds to the feeling of witnessing a very special moment.

One of the pleasures of diving off Jupiter in Florida is the opportunity to dive with the resident community of lemon sharks. I love watching them cavort and play as I ascend to my safety stop. By experimenting with my settings (depending on the lighting conditions of the day), I have captured some wondrous moments. In Photo 2, the inky black background serves as a backdrop that emphasizes the subtle shade gradient in the coloring of these energetic lemon sharks, creating an X-Y-Z dimensionality—a depth of field. When I took this photo and when I look at it today, I still feel myself pulled into the game these "puppy dogs" were playing.

One of the bucket list items for underwater photographers is to capture the wide-open jaws of a shark. Lemon sharks are particularly excellent for photographs with their jaws wide open. Their numerous sharp, needle-like teeth add an extra layer of excitement. In Photo 3, the black negative space (empty background) offers a canvas that immediately draws the viewer's attention to this "dental dream". In addition, the very pale pink of the shark's gums and the light beige of her gullet evoke a primal fear of terror in the night.

Speaking of primal fear, there is another shark that many people associate with human-shark interactions, and unfortunately not in a positive manner. Tiger sharks are beautiful, intelligent and curious. It is their inquisitiveness that initiates most human-tiger shark encounters. Photo 4 demonstrates the beauty of the bars and bands on a large female tiger shark. To feature and accentuate the very subtle pinks and blues of her otherwise metallic silver skin, I dusted her with my strobe lights (on a very low setting) against a very dark black background.

I was once told that to become a reasonably good photographer, all that it took was to push the shutter release, push again and keep pushing. I would add to that advice: Be willing to experiment, using subtle coloring and black, and let the light guide you… Click away. Please visit: **garyrosephotos.com**