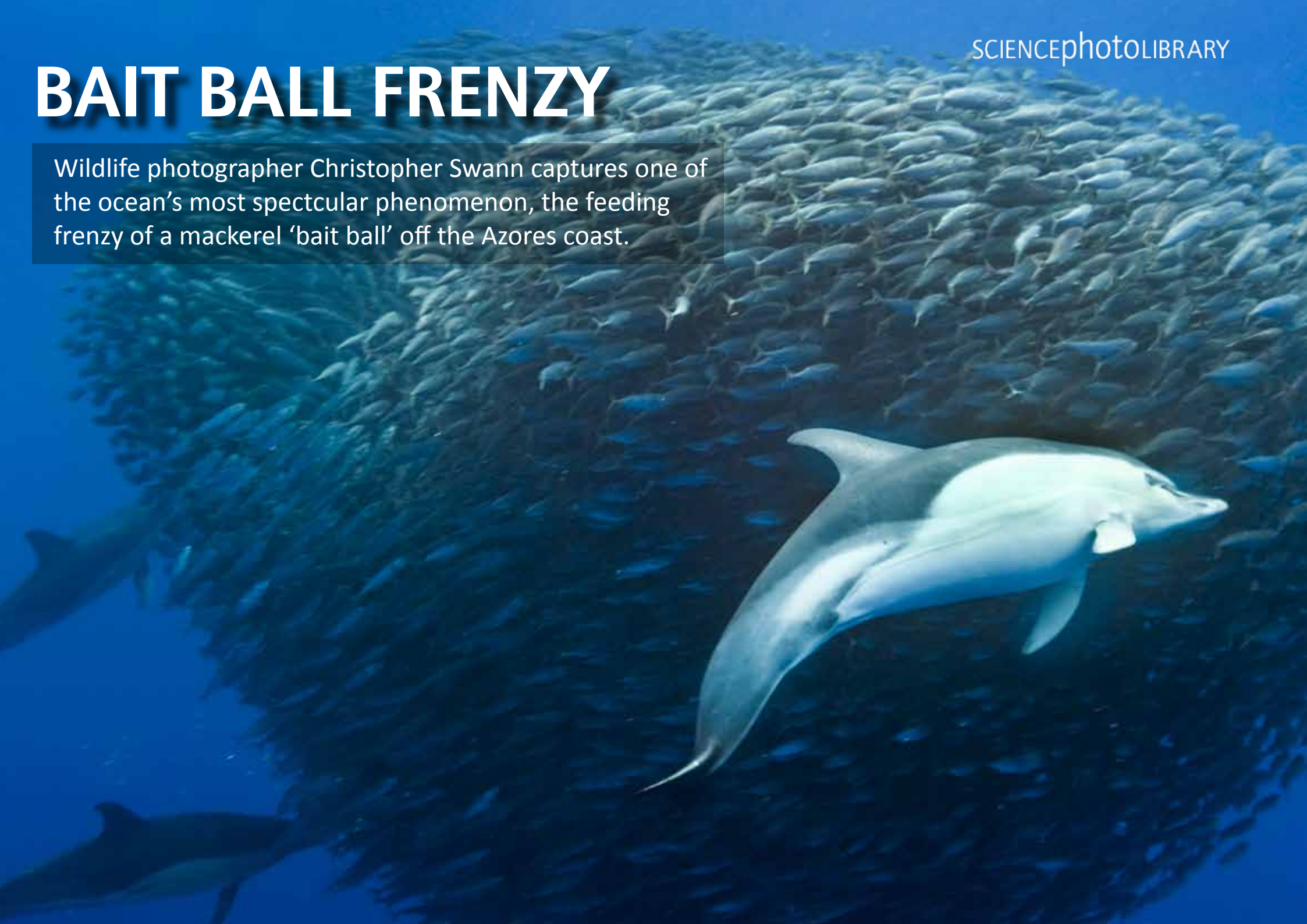


# BAIT BALL FRENZY

Wildlife photographer Christopher Swann captures one of the ocean's most spectacular phenomena, the feeding frenzy of a mackerel 'bait ball' off the Azores coast.







British Wildlife photographer Christopher Swann swam in the midst of a frenetic battle of life and death to capture these images off the coast of the Azores in the Atlantic Ocean. They reveal a shoal of mackerel fish instinctively forming a giant ball in order to confuse their predators.

Short-beaked common dolphins, sharks and Cory's shearwaters all feasted on the blue jack mackerel (*Trachurus picturatus*).

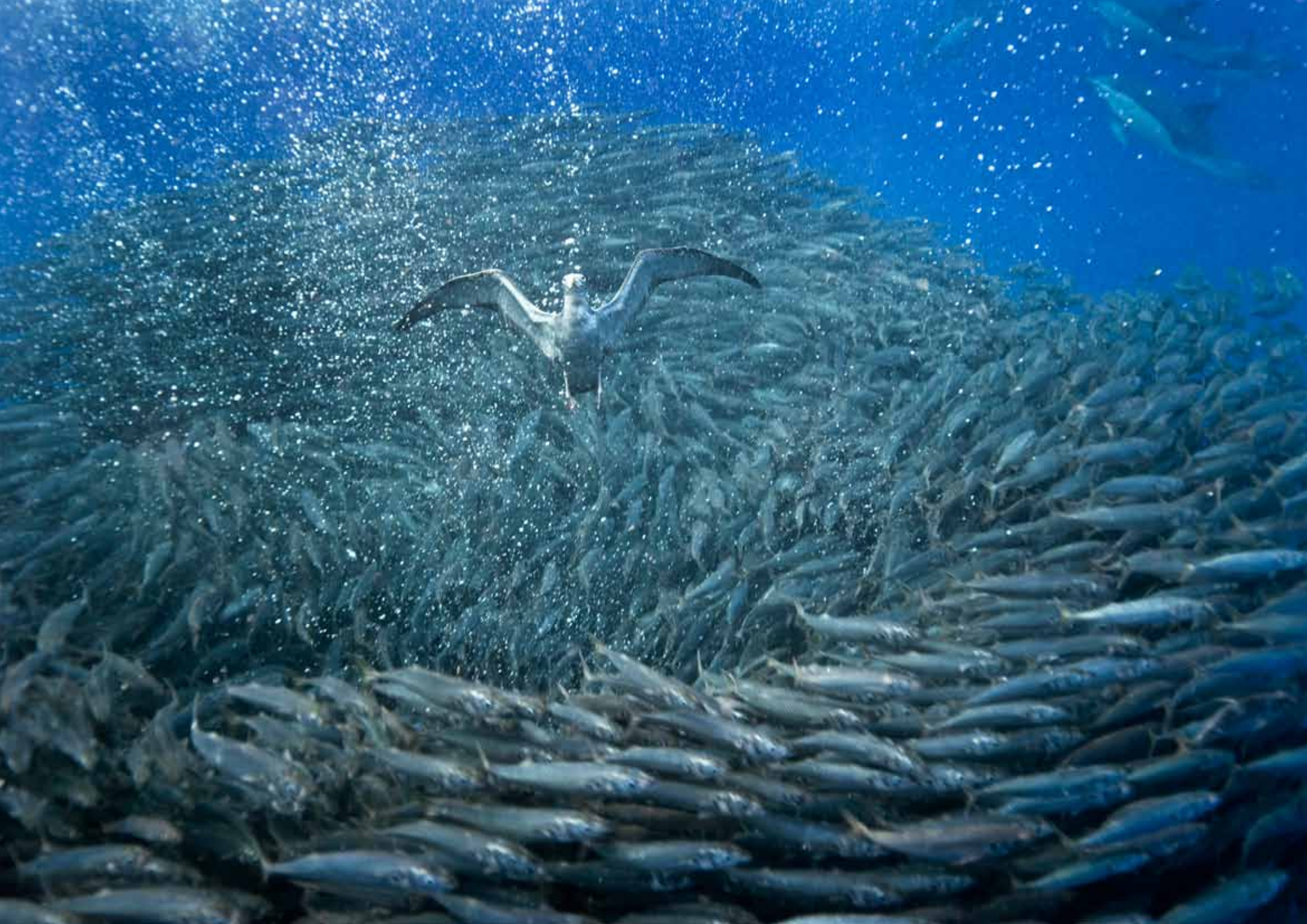
"It was a fabulous - like being among a cloud of starlings," said Christopher Swann, who comes from Brighton.

"It just went on and on. I can't say how many, but there were many thousands. It was approximately 30ft diameter at its maximum and at least as deep."

Bait balls are common among many small schooling fish, such as sardines, and can reach huge sizes of up to 20m in diameter















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