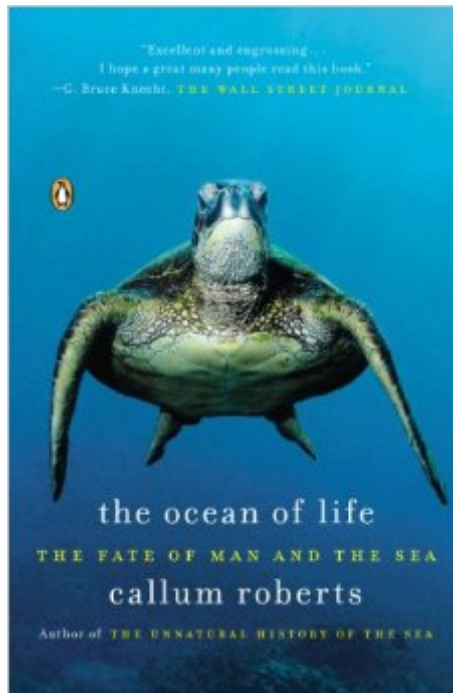


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# The Ocean Of Life: The Fate Of Man And The Sea



## Synopsis

A Silent Spring for oceansâfrom âthe Rachel Carson of the fish worldâ • (The New York Times)â The sea feeds and sustains us, but its future is under catastrophic threat. In this powerful and ambitious book Callum Robertsâone of the worldâs foremost conservation biologistsâtells the story of the history of the sea, from the earliest traces of water on earth to the oceans as we know them today.â He offers a devastating account of the impact of overfishing, deep-sea mining, pollution, and climate change and explains what we must do now to preserve our rapidly dwindling marine life. Passionate and persuasive, The Ocean of Life is a wake-up call that will appeal to anyone who loves the sea and its creatures.

## Book Information

Paperback: 432 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books; Reprint edition (April 30, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0143123483

ISBN-13: 978-0143123484

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.9 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 starsâ See all reviewsâ (39 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #69,798 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #22 inâ Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Biology > Marine Biology #26 inâ Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Oceans & Seas > Oceanography #31 inâ Books > Textbooks > Science & Mathematics > Biology & Life Sciences > Ecology

## Customer Reviews

As a concerned person about the state of our environment, I try to learn about the problems and what we can do to solve them. Ifâ Plastic Ocean: How a Sea Captain's Chance Discovery Launched a Determined Quest to Save the Oceansâ focused on the destruction caused by the everyday plastic we throw away, 'The Ocean of Life' takes a more comprehensive view to the problems that are rapidly killing the oceanic ecosystem, from overfishing to plastics to pollution (e.g. oil spill). In a scientific and balanced tone, Professor Roberts does not demonize one or the other but reminds us that we are all culpable through our daily, careless actions that have damaging consequences on the marine life. Our insatiable appetite for fish that is depleting the marine stock; the noises from boats and submarines that are damaging to whales and dolphins; the plastics that

flow into the oceans and killing birds, fish, and mammals alike; the Chinese appetite for shark fin soup that is rapidly killing sharks in a most agonizing manner; and, of course, the diseases that are rapidly killing the coral reefs and casting a dark shadow over the marine ecosystem. If things seem bleak, it's because they are unless we drastically change our ways and make some sacrifices. I recommend the book for anyone interested in learning more about the environmental issues pertaining to the oceans.

In this book, Callum Roberts sets out to argue the case that man is damaging the oceans of the world in ways that may be irreversible if not addressed quickly and determinedly. Roberts starts with a history of the oceans since the planet was formed, showing how previous episodes of warming, changes in acidity levels etc. have had huge effects on the animals that live there. He then gives a very detailed account, (perhaps a little over-detailed in parts) of the history of man's interaction with the sea, through fishing, shipping and pollution amongst other things. As he piles detail on detail, his argument that we are causing major and probably irreversible damage is completely convincing and thoroughly depressing. Some of the images he provides, of mass piles of discarded plastic gathering in the ocean gyres, of dead zones caused by chemical pollution, of coral reefs bleaching and dying, of life at the bottom of the seas being destroyed by trawling, are stark and horrifying. Of course we knew all this, but Roberts pulls it all together for us and shows us the consequences, so that no-one reading this book could be left feeling that this is a problem that can continue to be ignored. It is only in the last couple of chapters that Roberts offers solutions and not unsurprisingly these are fairly straightforward - to set up protection zones, to reduce the flow of chemicals and rubbish into the seas, to combat global warming. Straightforward but not easy, though Roberts also gives examples of some major advances that have been made over the last decade or so. (Who would have expected George Dubya to come out of a book like this as one of the heroes? Apparently he set up huge protected zones before he left office.) Roberts finishes the book by listing some of the many organisations working towards marine preservation and giving an idea of the approach each organisation is taking. I did not find this an easy or enjoyable read. It was hard work in places as Roberts piled on more and more evidence to back his arguments, sometimes with greater detail than I felt necessary. However, the message of the book is a vitally important one and Roberts has succeeded in getting that message across. I would highly recommend this to anyone with an interest in environmental matters - and that should really be everyone, shouldn't it?

This was a very well written but sobering read about the current state of our oceans. So many

problems; pollution, over-fishing, bad fishing practices (such as long lines and dredging), climate change, nitrogen laden "dead zones" in the oceans and bays, destruction of salt marsh and wetland habitats, soil erosion, dams, all these topics are covered in great detail and in a very interesting and enlightening way. Despite all the negatives and the fact that our oceans and waters are very much in real trouble, the author does offer solutions in the second half of the book and surprisingly is able to keep a reasonably optimistic tone. There are ways to maintain sustainable fisheries, provide energy in a way that will not contribute to our already too warm world, protect and restore marine habitats (such as coral reefs), prevent and clear our ocean's dead zones, and restore some of the diversity and abundance we so desperately need in this and really any ecosystem. There are two appendices included which offer ways to eat seafood in a manner that will protect our oceans from further damage and also a great list of conservation organizations working to protect and restore oceans and waterways. Overall this was a fascinating read and while sobering it did offer me some optimism that it is not too late to do something. We just need to start acting on an individual level because a lot of little squeaks together can make a big noise.

An exhaustive look at the pressures that human civilization are placing on the oceans. An important read. Covers many different topics. With that said, I found the tone of the writing to be quite apocalyptic (one could debate whether that is appropriate or not based on the circumstances) and the author seems to reject most proposed solutions without really putting too much forward as alternatives. As such, I found the book a little difficult to get through, and a bit depressing (again, that presentation may be justified given the circumstances). If you are looking for a lighter read on the same subject with proposed solutions, take a look at Sylvia Earle's "The World Is Blue." Although I'd recommend reading both books in tandem.

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