

# World Ocean Census: A Global Survey of Marine Life

By Darlene Crist, Gail Scowcroft, James Harding

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*"[A] distillation of a decade of exploration, magnificently illustrated and eloquently written. Some will treasure **World Ocean Census** as a valuable reference, others as a place to find white-knuckle adventures."*

*-- From the foreword by Sylvia Earle*

An insider's description of the comprehensive Census of Marine Life and what it reveals about a seriously threatened ecosystem.

The Census of Marine Life was launched in 2000 with the goal of producing the first-ever ocean census by 2010. Two thousand scientists from 82 nations agreed to the mandate to answer three important questions:

- What once lived in the global ocean?
- What is living there now?
- What will live there in the future?

With the census nearing completion, scientists around the world will inherit critical data that will be studied for decades to come. This data will be a basis for answering such simple questions as "What will become of sharks, whales, reefs and salmon?"

This book deals with the adventures and experiences of the Census of Marine Life and the process of gathering the data, revealing the stories behind the science. The authors detail the most fascinating findings and exciting discoveries -- the thrills encountered and the difficulties overcome -- all illustrated with fabulous images captured during the project's explorations.

The text readily engages the reader, and the photographs are as beautiful as they are accurate. The information is comprehensive, compelling and current, and it represents an enormous group effort by some of the world's leading scientists.

The organization of the book follows the three-part census mandate. Individual sections focus on a range of topics, from the logistics of the census to the space-age technology used to project the uncertain future of the world's oceans. The book is fully illustrated and provides informative captions and sidebars of data.

*World Ocean Census* is a unique record of a monumental global undertaking, worthy of a wide audience with a variety of interests.

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### Editorial Review

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The 10-year census of marine life, an international effort to log all of the species in the world's oceans, was launched in 2000. Several thousand scientists from more than 80 nations are attempting to answer three questions: What once lived in the global ocean? What is living there now? What will live there in the future? To answer the historical question, researchers have turned to sources as diverse as old whaling logbooks, fish bones recovered from archaeological digs, menus from restaurants, and old photographs and postcards. To discover what lives in the oceans now, scientists have developed new technologies such as radio transmitters attached to myriad marine species, satellites, deep-water diving suits, and remote-control submersibles, all of which can capture data in an environment that is anathema to humans. The excitement of discovery, particularly the almost constant revelation of species new to science, shines through what could have been dry reportage, and numerous photographs, many of the new species, illuminate the text. --Nancy Bent

Review

World Ocean Census is a gorgeous book that would make a great gift for someone who enjoys the ocean or works in a related field, or a great book to have on your own shelf as a reference. (Jennifer Kennedy *about.com* 2009-12-01)

The book is at its best when it offers glimpses of the astonishing array of sea creatures revealed by the survey. It includes critical data that will be studied for decades to come....Hundreds of breathtaking, full-color photographs plunge one deep into the ocean to see some of the millions of species - from the smallest microbes to the largest whales - that dwell beneath the waves. (N. S. Arun Kumar, BSc Botany, BEd Life Science, *Me AkN Science blogspot.com* 2010-04-30)

The World Ocean Census is compilation of a 10-year research effort into examining marine life.... Overall, this is an attractive book and it is modestly priced. Most general readers will find topics of interest. (Ralph Lee Scott *American Reference Books Annual*)

The excitement of discovery, particularly the almost constant revelation of species new to science, shines through what could have been dry reportage, and numerous photographs, many of the new species, illuminate the text. (Nancy Bent *Booklist* 2009-12-15)

This volume is a visual treat with its beautiful photographs of marine life from all parts of the ocean. Recommended. (J. C. Briggs, emeritus, Oregon State University *Choice* 2010-04-01)

The Census of Marine Life is a global network of scientists in more than 80 nations involved in a ten-year project to assess and explain the diversity of life in the oceans. On first examination, this appears to be a typical oversize book dedicated to beautiful underwater photography; however, in well-written text, [the authors] describe the various aspects of the Census for the educated layperson. Illustrated with examples of creatures found in all parts of the oceans, including many newly discovered and never-before-described species, chapters cover the different project groups, how they are gathering and publishing data, and why this is important. Several one- to four-page inserts explain such concepts as hydrothermal processes and the global ocean current conveyor belt.... This will appeal to readers attracted to nature photography as well as anyone interested in the ocean, science, or global climate change. Also useful for high school or college courses on climate, oceanography,

or biology. (Maggie Roux, Marine Biological Laboratory and *Wood Library Journal* 2009-11-15)

As the Census [of Marine Life] draws to a conclusion, it is an appropriate time to assess its accomplishments. *World Ocean Census: A Global Survey of Marine Life* is the first attempt to present these accomplishments in a format that is accessible to a broad audience. With its striking photography and high production standards, the book unfolds as a visual celebration of the Census. Marine biodiversity and the excitement of ocean exploration come alive as the reader thumbs through the pages and marvels at images collected from Census projects throughout the world ocean. As a coffee-table book, *World Ocean Census* succeeds admirably.... The most memorable message of *World Ocean Census* is that we must explore the ocean and understand its biodiversity before it's too late.... *World Ocean Census* is a start in the right direction. (Charles H. Greene, Director, Ocean Resources and *E Oceanography*)

This lavishly illustrated book comes in three parts: *What Lived in the Ocean?*, *What Lives in the Ocean?*, and *What Will Live in the Ocean?*, and along the way talks of the global ocean conveyor belt, the disappearing ice oceans, and the mystery of new life forms. The creatures range from the microscopic to a great white shark, cruising with its mouth wide open. (Bill Robertson *Saskatoon Star Phoenix* 2009-12-19)

About the only corner of the planet neglected by [a] world atlas, the ocean teems with hidden stories uncovered in this first-ever census of marine life... The survey reveals some of those hidden denizens of the deep, from the vampire squid to the flamingo tongue snail to the shoulderbar soldierfish, each as exotic-looking as their names. Census scientists have tagged seals, salmon and sooty shearwater shorebirds with transmitters to follow migrations. Arctic and Antarctic expeditions reveal changing populations under the pressure of a warming ocean. And everywhere looms the threat of extinction for overfished seafood stocks. "Above all, the breakthroughs in knowledge gained, and awareness of the magnitude of what remains to be discovered, inspire hope that the greatest era of ocean exploration - and ocean care - will now begin. (Dan Vergano *USA Today* 2009-12-12)

For those with a natural curiosity about our ocean planet, this new book by an award-winning author and two experienced marine educators is indeed timely and well-written. Superbly designed, the book evokes the majesty and mystery of life in the oceans through the use of captivating photographs, novel graphics, and easy-to-read text. Thorough and consistently high editorial standards are readily apparent. (*ARCTIC*)

[starred review] As industrial fishing fleets have mined the seas of life before scientists get a chance to study it, an international consortium of scientists, funded by their governments, began a collaborative effort in 2000 to catalog every living organism living in the global ocean. Scientists voyaged to regions that had never been studied before, such as the Gaskel Ridge in the Arctic, where unique hydrothermal vent communities were found, while others researched the human history of marine resource management to get an idea of pre-industrial ocean life... Glorious photographs, full of amazing forms and colors, capture many creatures readers will find entirely unfamiliar, as well the cutting-edge technology used to uncover them. Science writer Crist, along with scientists Scowcroft and Harding, have produced a highly readable text with stunning photos that should fully engage the public imagination, a fitting and accessible prelude to the full scientific report, due in 2010. (*Publishers Weekly*)

The book is at its best when it offers glimpses of the astonishing array of sea creatures revealed by the survey... [It] is full of high-quality photographs [that] reveal strange, recently discovered species... Fittingly, *World Ocean Census* begins and ends with spectacular photos of jellyfish, which are supremely suited to exploiting the niches created by overfishing. How humans respond to the trends revealed by the census will largely determine whether this 'jellification' of the ocean will continue, or if crippled marine populations may have a chance to recover. (Mark Schrope *Nature Vol 462/19* 2009-11-01)

The articles are written in an open and accessible style. (A. Hauge *Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association* 2010-07-01)

The general public, students, and even scientists interested in getting up to speed on the latest will find this book a captivating read. I would like to think that every high school library would have a copy of the book and that advisors would bring it to the attention of students contemplating a career in things oceanic. The works of William Beebe, Rachel Carson, and Jacques Cousteau inflected the careers of past and present marine scientists; this book promises a future in studies of the global ocean that those pioneers could never have envisioned. (Frank M. Truesdale, emeritus, Louisiana State Univ *Science Books and Film*)

Since 2000, thousands of scientists have been engaged in the Census of Marine Life, with the goals of determining what lived in the world's oceans in the past, what lives there now, and what will live there in the future. This visually stunning and highly readable book deals with the adventures and experiences of the scientists involved with the Census, and with how they are gathering data using both modern research vessels and sources as diverse as old whaling logbooks, fish bones found in archaeological digs, restaurant menus, and old photographs and postcards. Individual sections focus on topics including the logistics of the census and the cutting-edge technology used to project the uncertain future of the world's oceans. Profusely illustrated (mainly in full color), this volume should appeal to a wide audience.

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I love books that can easily be read by both a layperson and a scientist, and this is one of them. There's enough background information that anyone could pick up this book and enjoy it, but enough technical information to make the book a useful reference for someone who works with marine life. 5/5 stars. (Jennifer Kennedy, Marine Life Guide *About.com* 2012-01-01)

#### About the Author

**Darlene Trew Crist** is an award-winning writer and the author of *American Gargoyles*. Her recent work has focused on raising awareness about the health of the world ocean and related marine issues through her media relations work with the Census of Marine Life.

**Gail Scowcroft** is the associate director of the Office of Marine Programs at the University of Rhode Island. She conducted research on global climate reconstruction and climate change at URI and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and developed and administered ocean science education programs. She is currently serving as the national network director for the Centers of Ocean Sciences Education Excellence.

**James M. Harding, Jr.**, is a marine scientist and educator and works at the University of Rhode Island. He has spent much of his life in, under, on and around the ocean. He has taught marine biology and field research, swum with humpback whales and studied artisanal lobster fishermen.

**Sylvia Earle, PhD**, is an advocate of undersea research whose work has earned her recognition as Ambassador for the World's Oceans. She has served as chief scientist of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration and is explorer-in-residence at the National Geographic Society.

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