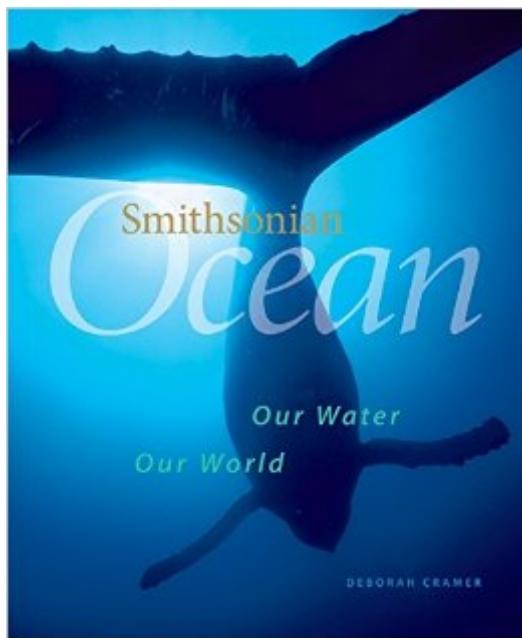


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Smithsonian Ocean: Our Water, Our World



Synopsis

Nobel Prize winner Al Gore wrote of Deborah Cramer's previous book Great Waters, "I urge everyone to read this book, to act on its message, and to pass on its teachings." Now Cramer offers a groundbreaking book for an even more urgent time. Our lives depend on the sea. As gifted science writer Deborah Cramer makes clear in this extraordinary volume, the ocean has been earth's lifeline for more than three and a half billion years. Life began in the scalding inferno of deep-sea hot springs. The first cell, the first plant, and the first animal were all born in the sea. Climate changes wrought by the sea created evolutionary pathways for mammals and gave rise to our human ancestors some 200,000 years ago. The one, interconnected sea still sustains us. Invisible plants in the ocean's sunlit surface give us air to breathe. Rushing currents supply water to the atmosphere's protective greenhouse and rain to dry land. But as Cramer reveals in this sweeping look at earth's biography, the vital partnership between earth and the life it nourishes has recently been disrupted. Today, a single terrestrial species, man, has begun to alter the health of the sea itself. The mark of humans on the seas is now everywhere— "from the fertile waters of continental shelves to the icy reaches of the poles, from the dazzling diversity of coral reefs to the porous edge of estuaries. Even the open ocean bears clear traces of our harmful ways. Scientists believe human impact may have already sparked a catastrophic event that could change the sea and the earth irrevocably: the sixth mass planetary extinction on a scale unseen since the demise of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. But unlike the forces that caused previous extinctions, humankind can make a choice. We can choose the mark we wish to make and the legacy we leave behind. Written in the passionate tradition of Rachel Carson, Smithsonian Ocean is at once a book for our time and for the ages. Carson wrote: "One way to open your eyes is to ask yourself: What if I had never seen this before? What if I knew I would never see it again?" Cramer's powerful and inspiring message is equally a wake-up call: "We hold earth's life-giving waters—and our future—in our hands." Our lives depend on the sea.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It seems like at any given time there are several larger format books about the ocean in circulation; none of them have come close to the extraordinary synthesis of beautiful, intelligent prose and eye-popping design that this book offers. I found I could read it straight through from its opening in *Eden in the Depths*, or dive in at *The Long Migration* or other selected places along the way, and in each case found myself drawn in immediately into Deborah Cramer's poetic text as it echoed off the elegant design, photographs, and maps. Definitely something I would recommend to friends and teachers everywhere.

I found this book enormously inspirational and informative. I enjoyed the pictures, but I loved Cramer's writing even more. She writes about science, hard science, in a beautiful readable way. This book is meticulously researched and yet easy to read -- an unusual combination. Everyone should own this book. It will motivate even the laziest reader to take action to protect the world's oceans. I am grateful to Cramer for writing such a distinctive and important book.

This is an amazing book: it covers a vast amount of time and space in beautifully written, easy to understand prose - accompanied by magnificent and photos that support the text.

Smithsonian Oceans is a beautiful book in words as well as pictures. Cramer clearly explains the importance of the oceans from the beginning of life in the deep ocean to the many ways the oceans are critical to our life on land. The pictures draw you in and her words keep you there. It is a good book for all ages.

Let's face it, the sheer gorgeousness of the pictures and layout are worth five stars alone. When this is allied with an excellent text, which is clear and crisp and not at all "dumbed down", the bargain that this book represents can no longer be denied. Thirdly, something not generally associated with

the louder voices in the USA these days; social responsibility. An awareness that we are raping, plundering, polluting and destroying an environment that we have barely begun to understand. Those loud voices often espouse a God-given right to exploit the planet without fear of consequences, of pursuit of short-term gain at the expense of long-term survival of so many species, perhaps even our own. In this regard, the book's final paragraph cannot be bettered:"We are a species blessed with language and awareness, knowledge and ingenuity, and an infinite capacity for imagination. May ours be a time when we reconceived our partnership with the sea and restored its life-giving waters to health and wholeness. May ours be a time when the sea's habitats and inhabitants, wherever they may be found true sanctuary...May ours be a time remembered when we embraced the sea as it embraces us"amen. James Smithson would be proud.

This book has everything, and things that are not even expected. This book is beyond complete, with every imaginable aspect about the ocean. It is full of great pictures, lots and lots of them, full of color, full of very interesting information. This book is a fantastic addition to our library!

Although I live far from the sea, Cramer's book offered me an incredible opportunity to become acquainted with the world's oceans and our dependence on these waters. The author presents meticulously researched science through compelling, beautiful text and stunning photography. The unparalleled match of high quality science writing and spectacular images makes this book a rare treasure.

I recently heard Deborah Cramer on American Public Media's "The Story" and was intrigued as I listened to her account of how she came to write this book. This book was an incredible reminder of the beauty in the world around us, undersea. The vast number of photos were incredible and one could easily buy the book just for the arresting imagery however there's a lot more to this book than the photos. Deborah Cramer is a wonderful writer and her descriptions of the interconnectedness of our worlds undersea and on land is remarkable and leaves you with an important reminder: By preserving the seas, we are preserving ourselves.

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