



Smithsonian Books

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Smithsonian Ocean

Our Water, Our World

By Deborah Cramer

Smithsonian Ocean: Our Water, Our World by Deborah Cramer (Smithsonian Books; ISBN 978-0-06-134383-4 on sale September 30, 2008; \$39.95) is a visual treasure and a passionate plea for sustaining life's most essential resource: the sea.

On September 27, 2008, the National Museum of Natural History will open a new permanent Ocean Hall - an \$80 million initiative, the museum's largest in a century. *Smithsonian Ocean* was commissioned especially for the Ocean Hall but it is much more than a companion volume. Deborah Cramer, one of the country's most celebrated science writers, has written an engaging and perspective-changing history of the ocean. Her text is gorgeously illustrated, and her argument compelling. *Smithsonian Ocean* offers a magnificent journey through space and time that concludes with an ocean ethic we ignore at our peril.

For more than three and a half billion years, the ocean has been earth's lifeline. 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. Opening and closing oceans created an environment where fish would crawl ashore. Some 200,000 years ago, climate change wrought by the sea

gave rise to our human ancestors. The one interconnected sea still sustains us. Invisible plants in the ocean's sunlit surface provide half the air we breathe.

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. Now the mark of humans on the sea is 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.

Written in the passionate tradition of Rachel Carson, *Smithsonian Ocean* is at once a book for our time and for the ages. 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. E.O. Wilson calls it simply "the best of its class."

About the Author:

DEBORAH CRAMER writes about science, nature, and the environment. Currently a visiting scholar at MIT's Earth System Initiative, she is the author of *Great Waters: An Atlantic Passage*. She lives in Gloucester, Massachusetts.

About the Museum:

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY has the largest marine collections in the world. Scientists at the museum, the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama, the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center on the Chesapeake, and the Smithsonian Marine Station at Fort Pierce, Florida, bring together decades of expertise in field- and collection-based research to provide critical information on the state of the world's marine ecosystems. The Smithsonian's new Ocean Hall, co-sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), is part of a broad-based Ocean Initiative to advance scientific understanding of the ocean and increase public awareness of its importance to all life. Visit the Ocean website at http://www.mnh.si.edu/exhibits/ocean_hall/.

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