

THE ALBATROSS AND THE FISH: LINKED LIVES IN THE OPEN SEAS

Doughty, R. & Carmichael, V. 2011. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press. 336 pp., 15 black and white and 13 color photos, 4 maps, 2 charts. Hardcover with dust jacket: ISBN 978-0-292-72682-6. US \$29.95.

Collectively, albatrosses are one of the most threatened bird groups in the world. This status is the result of human activities, and Robin W. Doughty and Virginia Carmichael have penned one of the first books dedicated solely to albatross conservation. Albatrosses breed on the most remote islands on earth, with all but three species nesting and foraging in the southern hemisphere. When not breeding, their distributions span thousands of kilometers, and are even circumpolar in some cases, resulting in lives that are largely out of sight and out of mind for most people in the world. However, their lives are intimately tied to the oceans on which they rely for food. As a result, the impacts that we as humans are having on the ocean environment, from overfishing to introducing non-native mammals to remote nesting islands, are having devastating consequences on virtually every species of albatross. Doughty and Carmichael have written an exhaustively researched but highly readable book that introduces readers to the birds, the fish they depend on, and to the alliances of organizations and individuals that are working together to save them.

The book is divided into five sections and 22 chapters: "The Albatross" (six chapters), "Crossings" (three chapters), "Birds and Fish" (four chapters), "Sea Change" (three chapters), and "Agents of Change" (six chapters). The first section begins with an interesting historical narrative of the biology of albatrosses and the stories of early researchers that laid the foundation of our body of knowledge today. The authors then discuss the impact of human activities and resultant population declines. In the "Crossings" and "Birds and Fish" sections, they outline the interactions and connections of albatrosses with fish, marine ecosystems and fisheries. In "Sea Change" and "Agents of Change" they discuss the chronology of the conservation effort and summarize all of the organizations involved in global conservation work now underway to save the albatrosses. Throughout the book, considerable effort is devoted to detailing the responsibilities, relationships, and actions of regional fishery management organizations, government and non-government organizations, as well as treaties. In addition, the book benefits from receiving input from many notable sources, including a foreword by His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, an introduction by John Croxall, and quotes from a "Who's Who" of seabird scientists and researchers.

While the target audience of this book is the general public, there is so much information, much of which would be difficult to find elsewhere, that even experts in the field will learn something new. This book would serve as an excellent reference for graduate students

and early career scientists who wish to familiarize themselves with issues affecting albatross conservation, and the legal and political framework in which conservation operates. The book is decidedly Southern Hemisphere-biased; the United States was not discussed in their chapter on the role of governments in albatross conservation issues, despite hosting almost the entire breeding populations of two albatross species, as well as being an active participant in fisheries bycatch research and albatross conservation. However, in fairness to the authors, the majority of the world's albatross species are in the Southern Hemisphere.

There are several minor issues with the book. The first, and most significant for this reviewer, was the formatting of the references. This book contains such a wealth of interesting references you will frequently find yourself wanting to know the source. Each chapter has references numbered sequentially starting at "1." To determine the author, you are directed to the notes section at the back of the book where you find the chapter in which the reference was noted, and then look at the number which only lists the author and year (i.e. Murphy 1965) for each numbered reference. You then need to flip to the bibliography section past the notes section to look up the full citation. The book would have been better served by numbering all the references sequentially without starting at one for each chapter, or just putting the names directly into the text. In any case, those interested in looking up the references (which you will inevitably do, given all the obscure and interesting historical notes) will find themselves repeatedly frustrated by this two-step system.

The second issue is the layout of the photographs. The book includes 13 color photographs in a single section in the center of the book, and then goes on to reprint each photograph in black and white in the body of the text. It would have been nice to have had photographs spaced throughout the text rather than a duplication of the color plates, particularly for readers with little prior knowledge of albatrosses and the conservation issues they face.

Those minor complaints aside, this is a well-written and extensively researched book on albatross conservation that even experts in the field will learn from. While the conclusions reached by the authors are not new, it will undoubtedly be a sobering read and serve to (re)sound the alarm over the potential extinction of many albatross species.

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