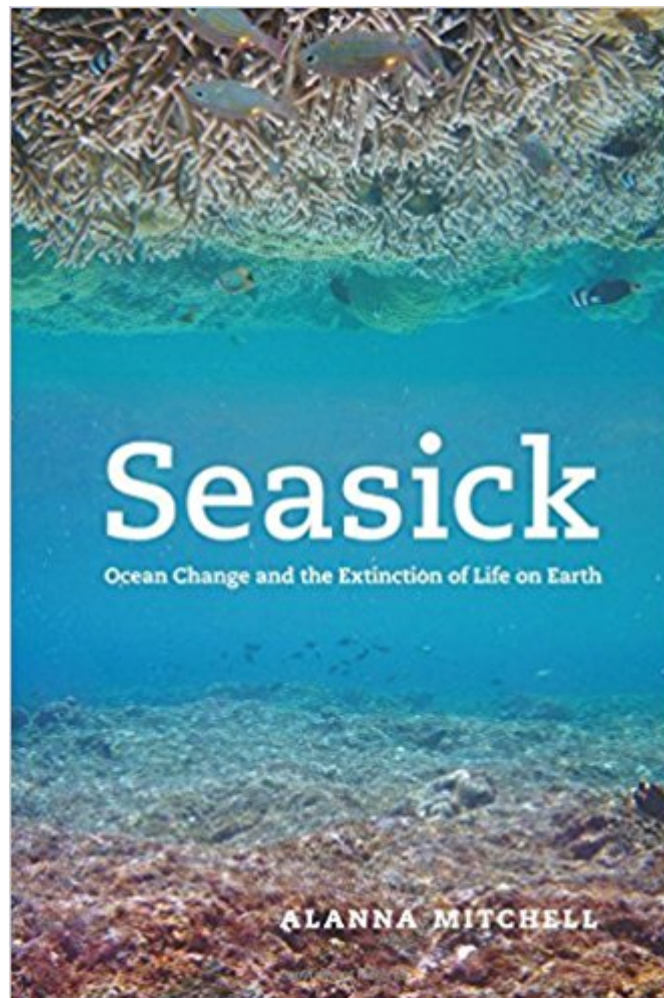




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# Seasick: Ocean Change And The Extinction Of Life On Earth



## Synopsis

We have long lorded over the ocean. But only recently have we become aware of the myriad life-forms beneath its waves. We now know that this delicate ecosystem is our life-support system; it regulates the earth's temperatures and climate and comprises 99 percent of living space on earth. So when we change the chemistry of the whole ocean system, as we are now, life as we know it is threatened. In *Seasick*, veteran science journalist Alanna Mitchell dives beneath the surface of the world's oceans to give readers a sense of how this watery realm can be managed and preserved, and with it life on earth. Each chapter features a different group of researchers who introduce readers to the importance of ocean currents, the building of coral structures, or the effects of acidification. With Mitchell at the helm, readers submerge 3,000 feet to gather sea sponges that may contribute to cancer care, see firsthand the lava lamp-like dead zone covering 17,000 square kilometers in the Gulf of Mexico, and witness the simultaneous spawning of corals under a full moon in Panama. The first book to look at the planetary environmental crisis through the lens of the global ocean, *Seasick* takes the reader on an emotional journey through a hidden realm of the planet and urges conservation and reverence for the fount from which all life on earth sprang.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Seasick" is a travelogue of sorts in which Mitchell takes her readers around the world to investigate the signs and causes of an unhealthy ocean. For many of us, the stories told in this

book will not be new. But those stories are well worth listening to again, if only to remind ourselves to ask and be able to answer the question, "So what?"

—Kiho Kim, "Oceanography"

"Oceanography" —Oceanography "Kiho Kim" "Mitchell trawls the oxygen-depleted oceanic dead zones in the Gulf of Mexico, counts the days after the full moon in Panama to figure out when to search for signs of coral spawn, questions what a souring ocean chemistry holds for the future of marine plankton communities, and recounts the actions that have depleted global fisheries, documenting the toll that one frightening assault after another has taken on our ocean.... Faced with the myriad ways humans are changing the ocean, Mitchell admits that giving in to despair would be easy. Instead, she chooses a personal voyage of discovery in an effort to get to the bottom of things—in some instances literally.... I found the argument for hope and change that she presents compelling."

—Rick MacPherson "American Scientist" (03/01/2010)

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—Kiho Kim, "Oceanography"

"Oceanography" —Oceanography "Kiho Kim" "Mitchell is a writer at ease explaining scientific fact and research, and at the same time writing lush evocations of great beauty on her travels around the world, as well as describing fear, insecurity and tragedy."

—James Murray-White "Green Prophet "

Alanna Mitchell spent fourteen years as a writer covering science and the environment at the Globe and Mail. She is the author of *Dancing at the Dead Sea: Tracking the World's Environmental Hotspots*, also published by the University of Chicago Press. In 2010, Mitchell received the Grantham Prize for Excellence in Reporting on the Environment for *Seasick*. She is the first book author to win the Grantham Prize, and the first Canadian.

I really liked this book. Alanna Mitchell dedicated her time over perhaps a period of three years to researching the health of our oceans. The reader travels with her to exotic places throughout the world and from researcher to researcher. I get to meet real people with a passion for the oceans and see it through their eyes. This book scares me into reality, it tells me what affect we really are having on the world's oceans. Mrs. Mitchell if you ever read this review, thank you for taking the time to write this book and setting me straight with what's going on out there.

The author of "Seasick" has managed to do a variety of things extremely well, including being sure

that her book was succinct (but not too much so), well-designed, extremely well written, and extensively researched via input from a variety of oceanographers and other scientists... And did I mention how INTERESTING this book is? My gosh, I thought I knew a lot about the ocean, but the number of individual facts and statistics that Mitchell presents, are just plain awesome. This book is enormously important, and so inviting to read (despite the negative implications of much that the author presents). I just cannot recommend it highly enough, but I hope you get the picture...

Alanna Mitchell is a journalist who writes of her 10 visits with ocean scientists studying the effects of global warming in 10 different areas of the world. She conveys important, alarming scientific findings in nontechnical language. Many of the scientists interviewed and praised are women, as if to demonstrate a feminist view that women are naturally concerned with the ocean, as the mother of all life. This is a short, clear book that should be read by everyone concerned with the environment. If we keep damaging our mother, surely the damage we do will harm us in turn.

One of my favorite environmental books. I often reference this book for great facts about ocean survival. You can tell the author really pushed to learn about the subject.

this is a must read book for everyone. Well written, factual, frankly quite alarming, but hopeful. I would recommend this to high schools and university study.

Oceans account for 99% of the living space and the majority of biodiversity on Earth. Though the oceans are vast, human mediated changes such as increased greenhouse gasses, pollution, and overfishing are changing the chemistry of the oceans and wreaking havoc on marine ecosystems. Only recently have we begun to understand the causes and implications of these changes, and it has quickly become apparent that immediate action is required to prevent catastrophic losses.

"Seasick" is a timely and alarming summary of the oceans' human induced perils, which are being accelerated by global population growth and industrialization. In fact, this book was published in 2009, before the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico directed the world's attention toward some of these problems. Author Alanna Mitchell is not a scientist, but after working with scientists all over the world, she has successfully channeled stories from seemingly disparate scientific fields into a coherent and powerful read. She explains how rising levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide and other anthropogenic inputs are causing rising temperatures, decreasing pH, changes in salinity, and harmful pollution in the seas. The extent of these problems is largely unknown, but the current

effects and predictions are grim. Because the oceans serve as a conveyor belt for nutrient and temperature dispersion of the earth, many organisms, especially humans, interact with and depend upon the oceans in unnoticed, but intimate ways. Frighteningly, ocean temperatures change more slowly than land and air temperatures. It is predicted that even if carbon emissions and atmospheric temperatures leveled off today, ocean temperatures would continue to increase for the next thirty years. These unprecedented changes are abrupt and massive. Ocean temperatures have risen by 0.5 C thus far, and are predicted to increase another 2.5 C in next 100 years, resulting in hurricanes of unprecedented frequency and intensity. Most scientific models predict disaster for ocean life if no action is taken between 2015 and 2030. It is obvious that if we don't act soon, the surviving species will be forced to live in very different conditions than those they have evolved to survive in. In this book, Mitchell barely leaves herself any text to address the more direct human implications such as rising sea levels, losses of potential medicines due to extinction, and developing conflict over ocean resources. However, these more obvious consequences will probably be necessary to persuade governments and citizens to action. Because these consequences are less imminent than losses of biodiversity, I fear our actions will be too late. Mitchell closes with an optimistic view of humanity and hope for the future. Since an understanding of the science and logic behind the oceans problems are now salient, she calls for a shift in our thinking, away from despair, towards wisdom and hope. She concludes the book with a simple statement, "If you believe that this matters and that something can be done, then the rest of the story reads that the time to act is right now." (135) I only wish she had been more explicit about actions her readers might take to achieve this.

Seasick is an eloquent description of the various threats to the world's oceans, and a thoroughly enjoyable read. Somehow Alanna Mitchell manages to make any reader feel better informed, even when the reader is a marine scientist. And she captures these stories through the eyes of researchers, which both underscores the validity of her arguments, and portrays scientists in a much more human fashion than is typical in science writing. Read this book! Mitchell earned the 2010 Grantham Prize for Excellence in Reporting on the Environment for Seasick - the largest cash prize for journalism in the world. And she thoroughly deserved that honor.

This book is well written in layperson terms so that you can easily follow the science behind the environmental changes and problems that are happening in our oceans. I like how the author travels the globe. The oceans encompass much of our earth and are home to rich resources and habitat ... it is our responsibility to learn about how our actions are impacting this watery realm. I

highly recommend this book and have been spreading the word, now is the time to read it.

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