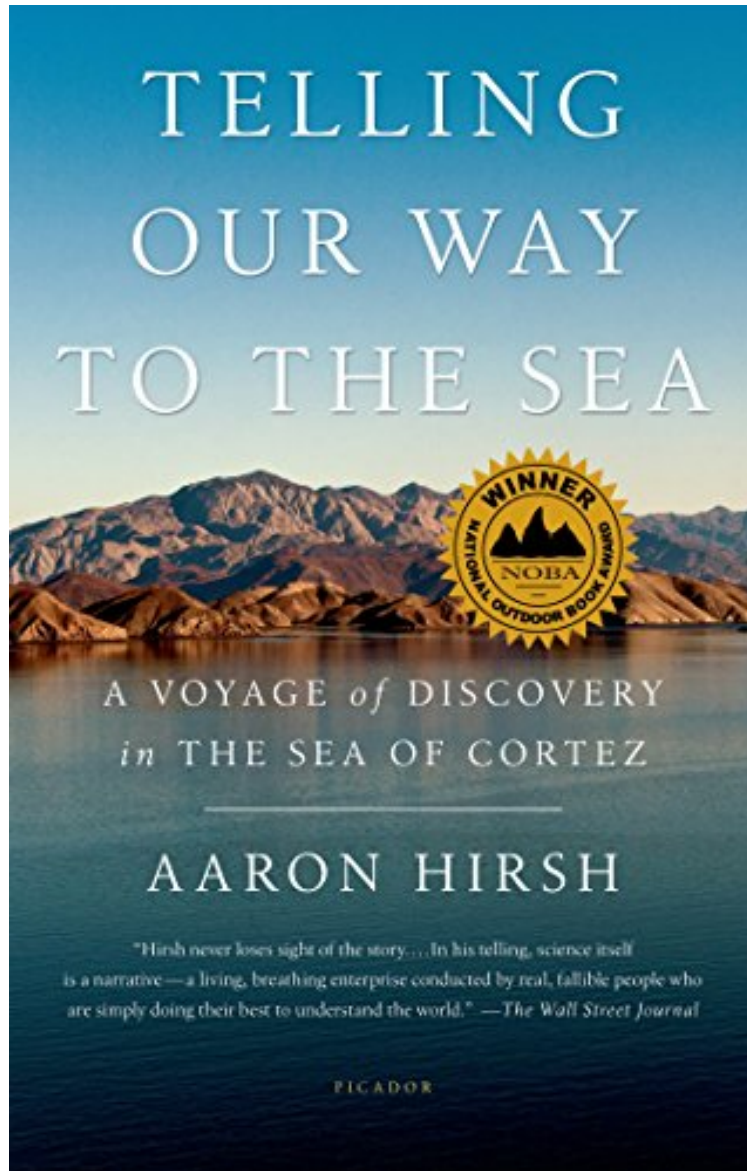


(Download) Telling Our Way to the Sea: A Voyage of Discovery in the Sea of Cortez

# Telling Our Way to the Sea: A Voyage of Discovery in the Sea of Cortez

Aaron Hirsh

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Aaron Hirsh : Telling Our Way to the Sea: A Voyage of Discovery in the Sea of Cortez before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Telling Our Way to the Sea: A Voyage of Discovery in the Sea of Cortez:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Conservation as ConversationBy Mike MacphersonFor me, this

book instantly places Aaron Hirsh in the company of our finest explainers: Gould, McPhee, Medawar -- that company. What Hirsh explains here is how to hold a conversation about our environment. The key, he says, is in the act of telling, and therefore in the act of listening. His subject is the Sea of Cortez, aka the Gulf of California. Hirsh and his wife, both biologists, along with their science historian colleague, teach a summer college course at a marine station in Baja. The book is framed around one summer's experience. The sea is in trouble. Even though it seems to teem with marine life, we learn that the waters are a ghost town compared to just fifty years ago. Systematic overfishing of the commercially valuable species, by both local and foreign operations, has caused populations to crash. The central question of the book is: what should we do about this? It's a setup you're familiar with, but Hirsh approaches it in a way you haven't seen before. He gives us an interwoven collection of stories -- the experience of his students as they come to understand the life of these waters, the economic tug-of-war between the fishermen, land developers, and conservationists, and Hirsh's brilliant accounts of the human and natural history of the region. On their own, these narrative threads are well worth reading. Hirsh's prose has a literary feel, always stately and assured, but with an astounding range that can handle technical exposition, real emotion, and even comedy without strain. A sample: 'At daybreak, fiery light pierced the folds of gray--the faded silver sky, the drifting tatters of fog, the mist rising off the bay--and struck our faces for the first time in four days. The desert steamed like a newborn landscape. The cardn and cirio looked clean and alive; every spine pricked a tiny droplet quivering with light. It was as if we'd blinked awake just in time to catch the sea being separated from the sky, the earth from the sea.' These stories, however, reach beyond themselves. The discussion of the evolution of the humble sea cucumber serves also as a critique of the contingent nature of scientific understanding. The story the domestic dog's origins also shows us that careful thinking sometimes leads us not to a 'right answer' but to 'right answers'. Each of his stories carries double meaning, about the fragility of our knowledge of the natural world. What to do about this, Hirsh suggests, is to hold a conversation. This conversation needs to involve all the stakeholders, and requires patience. The fisherman, the scientist, the artist, and the developer each have something to share that the other doesn't fully appreciate. Just as the interactions between the denizens of the sea balance out to an ecological whole, so might we find some balance between our collective observations and ideas, and change course. Note: the author is a friend of mine. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. One of the best books I have read in the past few years By Dmitri Petrov A disclaimer. The book is a fictionalized account of a class I used to teach together with Aaron Hirsh [...] The book weaves together the story of one place - Baja de Los Angeles - and the surrounding Midriff Islands in the Sea of Cortez. The book uses literary, historical, and scientific analyses to probe the role of memory in our understanding of the world as we encounter it. The writing is beautiful, the science is top notch and presented clearly for a lay reader, the history from Cortez to the present is fascinating, and the characters are interesting, three dimensional, and very human. You wouldn't be able to put it down and you will learn a lot in the process. The book just won the 2013 National Outdoor book award and has been very positively reviewed. Here is one such review in WSJ: [...] Here is one quote that I like: "A book as rich and intricate as the oceanic world it evokes, *Telling Our Way to the Sea* is hard to pigeonhole but easy to savor. Using the dramatic backdrop of the Sea of Cortez fertile waters rimmed by brutal desert Hirsh plumbs marine biology, evolutionary change, ecological memory, the history of science, and much more to explore the past and possible future of this fecund ecosystem. One of the most thoughtful books on nature, and our place in it, that I've read in years." Scott Weidensaul, author of *Living on the Wind* and *The First Frontier* 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Entrancing account of travel in the Gulf of Mexico. By ibmama Fascinating account of intense trip in the Gulf of Mexico: full of well-written descriptions of land, sky, weather and humans. Highly recommend. I read this while I was in Cabo Pulmo, a small community located in a protected National Maritime Park on the Gulf - and my reading increased my enjoyment.

WINNER OF THE NATIONAL OUTDOOR BOOK AWARD FOR NATURAL HISTORY LITERATURE  
FINALIST FOR THE WILLIAM SAROYAN INTERNATIONAL PRIZE FOR WRITING A SEATTLE TIMES  
BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR  
When biologists Aaron Hirsh and Veronica Volny lead twelve college students to a remote fishing village on the Sea of Cortez, they encounter a bay of dazzling beauty and richness. But as the group begins its investigations conducting ecological and evolutionary studies of the area and its natural inhabitants; listening to the stories of local villagers; and examining the journals of conquistadors and explorers they realize that the sea is but a ghost of what it once was. And yet there is redemption in their difficult realization: as they find their places in a profoundly altered environment, they also recognize their roles in the path ahead, and ultimately come to see themselves in a new light. By turns epic and intimate, *Telling Our Way to the Sea* is a profound meditation on our changing relationships with nature and with one another.

Hirsh never loses sight of the story.... In his telling, science itself is a narrative--a living, breathing enterprise conducted by real, fallible people who are simply doing their best to understand the world. The Wall Street Journal Fascinating... As they explore and make discoveries, [Hirsh's students] stand in for us readers, teaching as they learn. The Seattle Times Hirsh's narrative of daily excursions blends seamlessly with wide-ranging and penetrating forays into biology, evolution, and the history of science.... He writes with an illusion of effortlessness.... Unforgettable.

OnEarthIncredible...What binds this book is Hirsh's infectious enthusiasm. The Daily BeastI can't remember the last time I read a science book with such elegant writing, and Hirsh's travelogue has easygoing philosophical weight as well. SmithsonianBeautifully descriptive prose and accessible science combine to create a fascinating look at a seemingly abundant ecosystem...This work is a rich exploration of the Sea of Cortez and its surroundings for readers interested in the ecology, history, and current inhabitants of the area, as well as fans of lyrically written natural history books and/or of evolutionary biology. Library JournalA book as rich and intricate as the oceanic world it evokes, Telling Our Way to the Sea is hard to pigeonhole but easy to savor. Using the dramatic backdrop of the Sea of Cortez--fertile waters rimmed by brutal desert--Hirsh plumbs marine biology, evolutionary change, ecological memory, the history of science, and much more to explore the past and possible future of this fecund ecosystem. One of the most thoughtful books on nature, and our place in it, that I've read in years. Scott Weidensaul, author of Living on the Wind and The First FrontierAaron Hirsh thinks like a scientist and writes like a poet. Telling Our Way to the Sea is a captivating, deeply illuminating exploration of the sumptuous natural world we have, and of its origins in the many worlds we've lost. A moving and important and utterly beguiling book. William Souder, author of On a Farther Shore: The Life and Legacy of Rachel CarsonA person who is both a fine scientist and a brilliant writer is a rare phenomenon, but that describes Aaron Hirsh. In the first few pages of Telling Our Way to the Sea, you learn about the fascinating responses of *Isostichopus fuscus* to predators. After that, you won't be able to put the book down. A literary triumph. Paul R. Erlich, Bing Professor of Population Studies, Stanford UniversityAbout the AuthorAaron Hirsh is chair of the Vermilion Sea Institute. He is a research associate in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Colorado-Boulder, and his essays have appeared in literary journals, The New York Times, and The Best American Science Writing. Hirsh cofounded the biotechnology company InterCell and serves on the board of Roberts and Company Publishers. He lives in Boulder, Colorado.