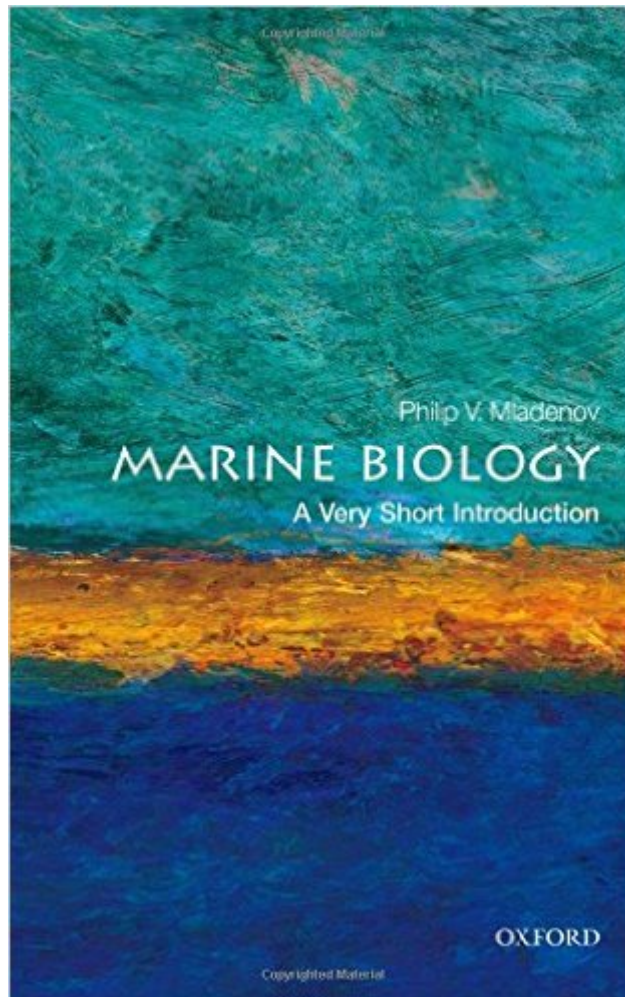


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Marine Biology: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)



Synopsis

The marine environment is the largest, most important, and yet most mysterious habitat on our planet. It contains more than 99% of the world's living space, produces half of its oxygen, plays a critical role in regulating its climate, and supports a remarkably diverse and exquisitely adapted array of life forms, from microscopic viruses, bacteria, and plankton to the largest existing animals. In this unique Very Short Introduction, biologist Philip Mladenov provides a comprehensive overview of marine biology, offering a tour of marine life and marine processes that ranges from the polar oceans to tropical coral reefs, and from shoreline mollusks to deep-sea hydrothermal vents. Mladenov also looks at a number of factors that pose a significant threat to the marine environment and to many of its life forms--threats such as overfishing, coastal development, plastic pollution, oil spills, nutrient pollution, the spread of exotic species, and the emission of climate changing greenhouse gases. Throughout the book he successfully weaves around the principles of marine biology a discussion of the human impacts on the oceans and the threats these pose to our welfare.

About the Series: Oxford's Very Short Introductions series offers concise and original introductions to a wide range of subjects--from Islam to Sociology, Politics to Classics, Literary Theory to History, and Archaeology to the Bible. Not simply a textbook of definitions, each volume in this series provides trenchant and provocative--yet always balanced and complete--discussions of the central issues in a given discipline or field. Every Very Short Introduction gives a readable evolution of the subject in question, demonstrating how the subject has developed and how it has influenced society. Eventually, the series will encompass every major academic discipline, offering all students an accessible and abundant reference library. Whatever the area of study that one deems important or appealing, whatever the topic that fascinates the general reader, the Very Short Introductions series has a handy and affordable guide that will likely prove indispensable.

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Customer Reviews

I've been an avid reader of marine science books since first discovering Rachel Carson's *The Sea Around Us*. For the average person, this is a clear choice for a thorough exploration of the ocean, its life and its processes. Regarding the title - it is indeed an excellent introduction to those new to the subject, but it is not short and this is a good thing! The author has a gift for imparting a great deal of information in a concise way - in other words, he's a great teacher. There's a good deal of disturbing information about the state of our global ocean and some books can overwhelm the reader to the point of depression. Sylvia Earle's *The World is Blue* is an example. I have the highest regard for Earle and what she has done to educate the world about the ocean, but her anger is evident on every page of her recent books and it can make new readers feel hopeless, just as many climate change books do. Somehow, Mladenov avoids this - his science is solid, brilliant and thorough, but easy to understand and while he addresses all of the problems facing the ocean, his steady and patient exploration retains a sense of wonder. He doesn't meld poetry and science like Carson, but no one does. Nor does he write with the cold detachment of so many science books. The ocean and its processes are complex and wondrous and he describes it all with patience and sanity. It is impossible not to learn from this book. It IS technical and is not a children's book, but any child really interested in the subject would devour it. I spent many weeks reading it - there's a lot to absorb, all of it worthwhile to learn and know. A brilliant scientific overview, providing a wealth of education for its size. There are plenty of warnings for us to heed, but he never resorts to fear-mongering, just education. The ocean is still alive and well and wondrous and while this book may be too technical for some, such as young children, it is THE book for the rest of us, especially those of us that need the science behind the wonder.

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle said that "all men by nature desire to know". The "very short introduction" series of Oxford University Press offers an excellent way to pursue the breadth of the desire to know in many varied subjects and endeavors. For example, the study reviewed here, the 354th book in the series, is Philip Mladenov's recent very short introduction to Marine Biology

(2013). According to OUP, the book is the only short introduction currently available on the subject. It explores well the sources, nature, and diversity of marine life. Over the years, I have explored bits and pieces of the subject but this book was my first cohesive overview. Mladenov is a former Professor of Marine Science at the University of Otago, New Zealand and currently serves as Director of Seven Seas Consulting, LTD. Mladenov has over 35 years experience in his subject. A book introducing marine biology might be devoted to presenting unusual, exotic examples of sea life, but Mladenov approaches his subject far more systematically. Mladenov points out that the marine environment covers 71 percent of the earth and includes its largest repository of living matter. He argues that because people are beginning to appreciate fully the importance of the marine environment to their lives, "a solid understanding of marine biology is more important than ever before". His book has the threefold aim of providing an overview of marine life and environment, considering the role marine life plays in the broader environment, and showing the impacts of human activity on marine life. The book takes a holistic approach. It begins with a brief overview of vital components of marine life, such as the chemistry of the oceans, the geography of the ocean floor, light and its importance, winds and circulation, temperature, water pressure, and more. The discussion is valuable in understanding the ecology of the ocean and the interrelated character of physical, chemical, geographical, and biological studies. The book then works up to offer a view of the ocean's "primary producers" -- the tiny forms of life that photosynthesize in the ocean and provide the basis for the entire food chain. The book then considers the various areas of marine life, emphasizing the unique conditions impacting each of them. These areas include, the coastal ocean, the polar regions, tropical marine life, particularly involving coral reefs, marine life in the deep seas, and life in the intertidal region. A final chapter discusses the ocean as a food source, with emphasis of the problem of overfishing. Each chapter offers a wealth of detailed if necessarily brief information. The author introduces and uses technical terms to the extent useful in understanding concepts. The chapters are well-organized as they generally begin with introductory information, work through small plants and animals and proceed to consider larger marine life. He shows the nature of, for example, seagrass, in the biological chain and then considers as well various factors that can upset ecological balance. Each chapter concludes with a discussion of the ways people and their activities impact the marine environment. Mladenov is particularly concerned with the possible long-range consequences of global warming. Mladenov concludes that finding a "globally holistic approach" to managing the environment and the oceans constitutes "human society's greatest challenge over the next twenty to thirty years". He writes, ""the decisions made will determine the future of the Global Ocean, the largest and most important habitat on the

planet."The material in this book is factually dense. OUP and Mladenov have made available a Reading Guide which consists of a series of questions testing the reader's understanding of the facts and concepts presented in the book. The guide may be used by individual readers or by reading groups. Here is an example of a question: "Why are seagrasses often referred to as 'turtle grass'? Does your group consider that seagrasses are important to human society? Why?" The detailed questions encourage a careful rather than a cursory reading of the study. Readers wanting to explore the nature of marine biology and to expand the scope of their knowledge will enjoy this book and its companions in the very short introductions series. Robin Friedman

I purchased this text as a teaching tool for an online course I am teaching. I am using it as an outline so I can hit upon the most important information in the short amount of time the course will run. It is written as more of an ecological text rather than a taxonomic laundry list of organisms that inhabit the oceans.

This book gives the reader an efficient introduction to the theme. A great overview about the main concepts used by marine biology science, physical, biological and ecological factors interacting, main threads posed by human impacts over nature. Some solutions are suggested at the final chapter and this will demand consistent scientific production and strong political action.

I am a professional biologist working with aquatic animals, and I found this book an excellent summary of the subject. Well-chosen highlights, illuminating examples, just the essential formulas and numbers. Of course it cannot cover all aspects of this (gigantic) field. To go deeper I would recommend for instance the textbook by Levinton. But Mladenov's VSI is quite worthed even if you're familiar with marine sciences. And if you're not, you might get hooked!

This entry to the VSI series is excellent as usual, and it revived my interest in Marine Biology in a way nothing else has. The only - somewhat amusing - detractor is that the author peppers the entire work with redundancies: "...demersal bottom-dwellers...", "...benthic feeders at the ocean floor...", etcetera (and so on). It is a veritable, true Thesaurus book of similar words.

Bought it for a future Marine biologist, but also read it myself and very interesting even if you don't want to be a marine biologist

Exactly what I was looking for. An informative work perfect for anyone who enjoys marine biology and is looking for some light reading.

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