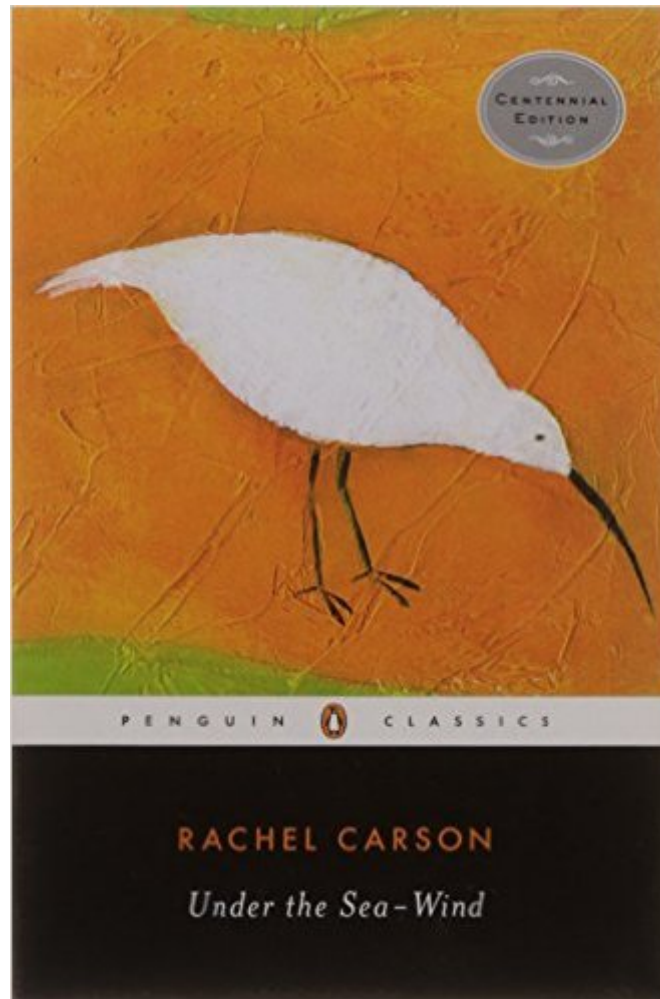


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Under The Sea-Wind (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

Rachel Carson's "pioneering environmentalist and author of *Silent Spring*" opens our eyes to the wonders of the natural world in her groundbreaking paean to the sea. Celebrating the mystery and beauty of birds and sea creatures in their natural habitat, *Under the Sea-Wind* "Rachel Carson's first book and her personal favorite" is the early masterwork of one of America's greatest nature writers. Evoking the special mystery and beauty of the shore and the open sea "its limitless vistas and twilight depths" Carson's astonishingly intimate, unforgettable portrait captures the delicate negotiations of an ingeniously calibrated ecology. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What a treasure found! Luckily I purchased *Under the Sea Wind*, prior to sailing my small boat to an equally small atoll. This book gives the reader an appreciation and understanding of life around the sea. More importantly, it increased my situational awareness to glean some of the Ocean's less obvious life. Upon making landfall at Palmyra Atoll, I was more able to see the life occurring before

me. This book would be of value to any cruising sailor, hiker, or motorhome wanderer. This book makes an excellent gift to the homebound and undermotivated friends. It is superbly written by one of the finest writers of this century and children love it's flowing pace of words. Perhaps the best advice is to read this fine work, next to that buy a copy for a friend.

This is a very unusual nature book. Most nature books are based on first-hand experience and observations (e.g. see Henry David Thoreau, Edward Abbey, Robert Finch's books). While Rachel Carson certainly studied and observed the animals she describes in this book, she did not dive under the sea, thus a lot of the narrative is based on imagination (educated imagination, no doubt). The personification of the animals -- to give them human names and describe their feelings -- is also very unique in nature books. Nonetheless, these do not detract from the scientific accuracies of Carson's descriptions. As an literary book, these in fact make the book very much more readable. Reading it is like watching a Discovery channel documentary. I deduct one star not because of the book itself, but because of this Penguin edition. I believe there is another edition of the book with illustrations by Bob Hines, I think those illustrations are fantastic. This book contains the illustrations by Howard Frech, the same as the first edition. These illustrations are fine, but there are very few of them (I am not sure if the Penguin edition even includes all of the original Frech works). The edition with Bob Hines' illustrations are infinitely more fun to read, why did Penguin not use those? Actually, why not use both??

I had never heard of marine zoologist Rachel Carson. I bought her book 'On The Edge Of The Sea' in a 2nd hand bookshop in a bunch of other random Natural History because I liked the cover. After OTEOTS I read 'The Sea Around Us', and most recently 'Under the Sea Wind', the subject of this review. As with both her other books, Ms Carson's intelligence and heart leave glittering wakes through this overview of mid-twentieth century research on the sea, particularly its animal life. This is such a juicy book. Each creature she gives us, from whale to worm, is treated with a personal glee that endears them to us. She makes small stories of each of their singular lives. I now care personally about annelid worms. Who knew? Drawing back from the individual she then illuminates the ways in which each life is dependent on the whole, and the whole on each life. She writes like an angel about the world of the mundane; simply, in gorgeously structured, shiny prose and all the while informed by her own massive research. Her love for her subjects leads the way, and refreshes itself at every turn. Her sense of detail is immersive, and her sensibility of the marvel of forms is catching. There is something other than her brilliance that struck me about the above three books.

Because Rachel Carson was writing in the years just before the spread of environmentalism, they are touchingly non-political in tone; no warnings, no fretting. They were followed by her last book, the enormously influential 'Silent Spring', a warning text that documents the ways in which the sea was suffering from human activity. Her love for the sea and its shores, so beautifully written in her first three books, is transformed into political awareness and activism. It's a good and lovely thing to witness. This author died in 1964 so we only have four books to fall in love with. Shame.

In this, her first book, pioneering environmentalist Rachel Carson takes specific types of animals and gives them enough personality and character to tell a story about them, as they go about a normal part of a day in their natural seaside habitat. Each of the chapters takes a look at a part of the land-meets-ocean ecosystem to depict wildlife interaction in a way that reflects actual settings and animal behavior. Written in a present tense, moment by moment style that is engaging, the prose seems effortless. Carson is undoubtedly an expert when it comes to the flora and fauna of the kinds of outer banks islands along the Atlantic Coast of the United States, and most of the readers who have vacationed anywhere from New Jersey to Florida will recognize many of the species she depicts. The narrative style allows Carson to inform as well as entertain her readers, with many fascinating facts about the birds, fish and other wildlife. I read this book while on one of the North Carolina islands, and found it fitting that the shore birds I enjoyed watching in flight or along the beach were portrayed in such detail. Yet, for me, there was a bit too much of "and the next moment, animal A ate animal B, and then at once, animal A was eaten by animal C". After the first three chapters of this sort of thing, I became a bit tired of the relentless repetition of the survival of the fittest approach Carson takes throughout the book. "Under the Sea Wind" received very good reviews in its first edition, but it sold poorly. After Carson's "The Sea Around Us" (1951) succeeded, "Under the Sea-Wind" was republished and gained a larger readership. Rachel Louise Carson was born near Springdale, Pennsylvania, on May 27, 1907 and lived until April 14, 1964. She was a marine biologist and nature writer, whose books were instrumental in advancing global environmental awareness. Her best known book is "Silent Spring".

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