



Ocean Seasons

Ron Hirschi

Kirsten Carlson, Illustrator

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Spring evokes images of blooming flowers and baby birds. Seasons bring transformations beneath the Pacific Ocean too in this inviting and informational book, as spring produces colorful plants, summer begets calmness, autumn's growing darkness causes tiny plankton to die and fall to the ocean floor, and winter drives humpback whales south to tropical waters. Just as on land, the cycle then begins again.

The lyrical text not only describes the changes that occur throughout the year amidst the ocean's plants and animals but also how they form a food web. Kelp is munched by urchins, which in turn are eaten by hungry sea otters. The kelp forests are additional nourishment for fish, crabs, and shrimp, which in turn are fine dining for birds and seals. Even humans who fish for salmon are part of this elaborate chain.

Hirschi is a biologist who has written more than fifty children's books on animals and the environment. His books have been honored with the John Burroughs Nature Book Award, listed as a Best Science Trade Book of the Year, and featured on *Reading Rainbow*. While picture books about the ocean abound, the author offers a unique coverage of this topic. He concludes the text with "Food Web Cards," which allow children to play a quick card game and extend their knowledge.

Carlson, also a biologist, combines her passion for marine science and art in stunning, realistic watercolors. Rich blues, greens, and purples convey the changes in light and depth above and below the sea. Close-up paintings allow children to observe orcas, humpback whales, puffins, seals, and other fascinating creatures.

While this beautifully written and illustrated book focuses on the Pacific Ocean, it can easily be adapted to life in other oceans. Whether used for research or to satisfy children's curiosity, this new take on the cycle of life will bring wonderment.

ANGELA LEEPER (June 7, 2007)

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