

## The California Current: A Pacific Ecosystem and Its Fliers, Divers, and Swimmers

**Stan Ulanski**

The University of North Carolina Press (Apr 18, 2016)

Hardcover \$30.00 (256pp)

978-1-4696-2824-0

*This celebration of Pacific ecosystems encourages conservation and an appreciation of biodiversity.*

*The California Current: A Pacific Ecosystem and its Fliers, Divers, and Swimmers* is an exceptionally well researched and engaging examination of a vital 2,000-mile ocean community that extends along much of the Pacific Coast. Author Stan Ulanski, a geology and science professor at James Madison University, has written similar works on the Gulf Stream and fly fishing, and he is an informed and passionate guide to these watery environments.

*The California Current* examines myriad aspects of the Pacific coastal ecosystem, from microscopic phytoplankton to the massive humpback whale. Each chapter is informative and enlightening, layered with intriguing details about these creatures and illustrated with helpful maps and photos.

In the chapter on seabirds, for instance, we learn about the breeding and migratory patterns, physiology, and feeding habits of a variety of birds. That includes the kleptoparasitism of certain gulls and frigate birds, who will cunningly steal meals from other birds, even nestlings. The chapter describes how an extended wingspan and unique flight patterns enable the albatross to spend weeks or even months aloft over ocean waters and then contrasts that with the astonishing diving prowess of the Galapagos cormorant. The chapter's concluding paragraphs note how global warming, commercial fishing, and other impacts are threatening seabird populations, while refuges like the Channel Islands and Farallones provide essential breeding grounds for dozens of important species.

Although his tone is urgent when describing man's impact on this ecosystem, Ulanski is never alarmist. When reviewing the history of the fishing industry on the Pacific Coast, for instance, he recognizes the economic challenges of fostering sustainable fishing practices that also protect populations of turtles and dolphins. The book celebrates developments, such as species mapping and fishing nets lit with ultraviolet light, that have the potential to significantly reduce mortality rates for threatened species while allowing for viable fishery.

Spend several hours with this accessible, engaging book and emerge with a deeper understanding of these amazing animals, their life cycles, adaptations, interdependencies, food webs, and migratory patterns. At the same time, appreciate the important conservation research and work underway to help preserve these magnificent creatures for generations to come.

KRISTEN RABE (Spring 2016)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*