



The Death and Life of Monterey Bay: A Story of Revival

Dr. Stephen R Palumbi PhD, Ms. Carolyn Sotka M.A.

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Anyone who has ever stood on the shores of Monterey Bay, watching the rolling ocean waves and frolicking otters, knows it is a unique place. But even residents on this idyllic California coast may not realize its full history. Monterey began as a natural paradise, but became the poster child for industrial devastation in John Steinbeck's Cannery Row, and is now one of the most celebrated shorelines in the world.

It is a remarkable story of life, death, and revival—told here for the first time in all its stunning color and bleak grays. The Death and Life of Monterey Bay begins in the eighteenth century when Spanish and French explorers encountered a rocky shoreline brimming with life—raucous sea birds, abundant sea otters, barking sea lions, halibut the size of wagon wheels, waters thick with whales. A century and a half later, many of the sea creatures had disappeared, replaced by sardine canneries that sickened residents with their stench but kept the money flowing. When the fish ran out and the climate turned, the factories emptied and the community crumbled. But today, both Monterey's economy and wildlife are resplendent. How did it happen?

The answer is deceptively simple: through the extraordinary acts of ordinary people. The Death and Life of Monterey Bay is the biography of a place, but also of the residents who reclaimed it. Monterey is thriving because of an eccentric mayor who wasn't afraid to use pistols, axes, or the force of law to protect her coasts. It is because of fishermen who love their livelihood, scientists who are fascinated by the sea's mysteries, and philanthropists and community leaders willing to invest in a world-class aquarium. The shores of Monterey Bay revived because of human passion—passion that enlivens every page of this hopeful book.

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