

Book review

Secrets of the Seas

by Alex Mustard and Callum Roberts

by Peter Rowlands

Please bear with me but life can be a bit spooky at times.

My wife Debbie and I walk up to our local shop on a Sunday to buy our newspaper and collect one for an elderly neighbour of ours. We take it in to him and have a sit down chat about the world and how we think we can solve it and then we leave him to enjoy his Sunday.

On one particular visit he said “I’ve got something that I think will be of interest you.”

As an elderly person, like what I am about to become, he delights in browsing the bookshelves in charity shops and he came across a copy of “The Unnatural History of the Sea” by Callum Roberts.

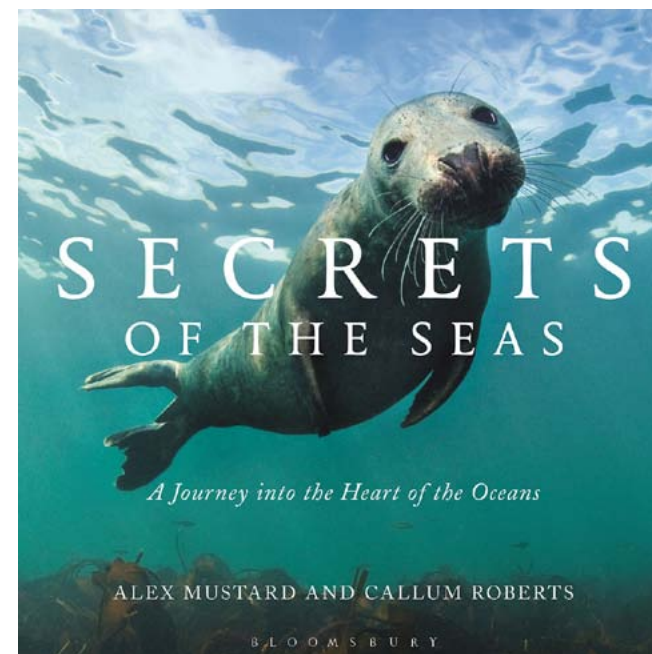
Now I must confess that, believe it or not, I’m not a great reader but I took to Callum’s book immediately. It started with the fact that in 1741, hungry explorers discovered herds of Steller’s sea cow in the Bering Strait, and in less than thirty years, the amiable beast had been harpooned into extinction. I realised that a very small section of human society could

have such a devastating effect on the balance of nature. Follow it up with the early days of scuba diving on the west coast of America which saw the population of abalone decimated and I got it that we, humans, are totally responsible for what is left in the sea.

Callum’s calm reporting of the historical facts was absolutely engaging and he used just words alone.

Fast forward a few months and my partner in Magic Filters, Alex Mustard, and I were in conversation when he told me about his latest coffee book project which involved ‘an eminent marine conservation biologist’. “That sounds like a good combination” I said and trying to appear worldly read and informed I said “Would that be Callum Roberts?”. The line went quiet and Alex said “I want to keep this under wraps until the launch”.

A few weeks ago I was sent a copy of their new book “Secrets of the Seas” and on the surface of it, it is very impressive visually and informative.



The images, as you would expect, coming from Alex Mustard are of the highest quality taken from all around the world in all kinds of seas.

The problem I have is that the photo captions and Callum’s caption style text create a conflicting conversation which in real life would be like trying to listen to two people vocally vying for your attention with a wall of visual and written information.

As a result this book never really gets going for me but maybe that’s the nature of a coffee table book. You can pick it up and glean facts and visual treats without having to make a commitment to it. If that was the intention then it succeeds very well but I preferred “The Unnatural

History of the Sea”.

The other problem I have with this book, and for me it is a big problem; there is not one ‘real’ image in it. A dynamited reef, marine life captured in a nylon wall of death, dead fish lying on a toxic surface or huge areas the size of small countries of plastic and festering debris.

I am sorry but there are more secrets in the seas than this book reveals.

This is the Disney version.

Peter Rowlands
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