

FOR WHALES' SAKE

By Jackie Hildering



I've been asked why, as an environmental educator, I focus on the ocean. With June 8th being World Ocean's Day, it's a good time to address this question.

71% of the earth's surface is water; 97% of this is ocean. Earth is

"The Blue Planet"; "The Ocean Planet."

It doesn't matter how land-locked you are, you need the ocean. More than 70% of the oxygen in our atmosphere comes from it. The ocean feeds us and regulates our climate (buffering the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, for example). Life on land could not survive without the ocean.

We depend on it for transportation, food, water, disposal, recreation, energy, oxygen, and inspiration and yet we know more about the moon than we do about our seas. Reflection on the ocean should jolt us into the appropriate humility

and precaution. We are still discovering many new marine species and even new marine ecosystems and habitats. Local examples are the Endeavour hydrothermal vents and Hecate Strait's glass sponge reefs.

It doesn't matter how land-locked you are, you will influence the ocean, in what you choose to consume (from food to fuels)

and in how you choose to dispose of waste.

Such reliance on the ocean, so many unknowns and yet we seem so willing to take it for granted. It is my experience that many people don't know where their fresh water comes from or what happens to their waste. There might be some understanding of landfills and sewage treatment but insufficient comprehension of the legacy of chemicals left by these processes.

All life on earth is connected by the ocean. The



Ode to the Ocean

water on the planet now is the water that was here even before there was life on earth, perpetually morphing between gas, liquid and solid states, being transported around and around our fair planet. To understand the water cycle is to know that pollutants can be transported through groundwater to the ocean and can globally distill across the Pacific Ocean in just 7 days.

The more we are disconnected from nature as urbanites and technophiles, the more we are programmed to consume and believe that human ingenuity will find a solution for every problem – the more the ocean suffers.

It is life in the ocean that will testify to the magnitude of environmental problems first.

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