

Review: The Perfect Protein: The Fish Lover's Guide to Saving the Oceans and Feeding the World

By Andy Sharpless and Suzannah Evans

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Sharpless, Andy and Suzannah Evans. *The Perfect Protein: The Fish Lover's Guide to Saving the Oceans and Feeding the World*. New York: Rodale Press, 2013. 198 pp. ISBN 9781609614997, US \$21.99. Hardcover.

The Perfect Protein: The Fish Lover's Guide to Saving the Oceans and Feeding the World, from Oceana, the largest international ocean conservation and advocacy organization is a very powerful and persuasive book for many reasons. Its arguments and the breadth of the knowledge of the authors are impressive and the story telling is compelling. It also has an urgent forward by former President Bill Clinton, and is endorsed on the back cover by a number of well-known environmentalists and ocean protectors. Its argument is hard to contradict: we should be eating more fish for own health (not a lot of attention to mercury poisoning here), and better manage fisheries for the benefit of the many who do without all over the world and who depend upon fish as their food source.

The authors try to cover all the bases in making their argument. Fish, they contend, is healthier, more available and more nutritious than many other types of food. They include history, science, politics, criticism, and recipes to make their point. The book offers practical advice about how to eat seafood sustainably championing the efforts of The Monterey Bay Aquarium in this area. Their scope is also global with stories from all over the world.

Sadly, "fish" is considered just a food source rather than a living thing in this book. The authors champion the rights of the fishermen, but not those of the fish, which is usually the case in marine conservation books. One has to think about some of the politics and different messages being made in this presentation. Billions of people in developing countries depend upon fish to feed themselves, but there is currently a crisis with many of the world's fisheries in trouble. The point also should be made if we do not curtail the over consumption of fish, they may no longer be around to feed those people also. Industrial fishing is also sometimes a culprit.

There are some major contenders in this area vying for the attention of the public. There are the eco-tourists and aquariums who want people to appreciate wildlife. They find all manner of things special. There are scientists who wish to study fish and sometimes protect them. There are the fishermen and hunters who seem to be winning the arguments, especially since aquaculture has been criticized rather than championed. It can be their livelihood. There is The Environmental Movement which is not as concerned--or not only concerned--with Preservationism as they once were. There are the hungry masses that need to be warned about "The Tragedy of the Commons." Meanwhile, the journalist and educator are caught in the middle.

This is a great book for those students who find giving fish rights a lost cause. This book successfully argues for the protection of marine ecosystems, better fisheries management, and responsible and healthy fish consumption. Many people and environmentalists are not going to become vegetarian but they will be better about fish because of this book.

Caught here, however, is some jockeying on Oceana's part with a few cases of fingers pointed at some environmental groups and aquaculture. Oceana, founded in Washington D.C. in 2001, has not been around as long of some of these venerable organizations who have been fighting the good fight for generations. There is also no lament here that fish have gone the way of the chicken, lamb, and cow, animals that are now domesticated rather than really wild. The authors prefer wild fish to aquaculture which has tried to counteract the declining wild stocks. Those who work at aquariums know that fish are also wondrous creatures, and there are also some alternatives for when the fish run out not in the included recipes.

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