

Fire in the Turtle House: The Green Sea Turtle and the Fate of the Ocean

By Osha Gray Davidson

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Fire in the Turtle House: The Green Sea Turtle and the Fate of the Ocean
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A scientific detective story, grippingly told by an award-winning journalist: A mysterious, deadly infection is killing off one of the ocean's most beloved and ancient creatures. Why? And what does it mean about the fate of the oceans?. Sea turtles have existed since the time of the dinosaurs. But now they are dying, ravaged by a gruesome plague that some biologists consider the most serious epidemic now raging in the natural world. What is happening to the sea turtle, and how can it be stopped? Osha Gray Davidson tracks the fervent efforts of extraordinary scientists, marine biologists, veterinarians, and others racing against the clock to unravel this complicated biological and environmental puzzle and keep the turtles from extinction. He dives with Ursula Keuper-Bennett, a schoolteacher whose relationship with a Hawaiian turtle changed her life and led to major discoveries about turtle social life and communication, and visits eminent sea turtle scientist George Balasz. He follows the fates of particular turtles, revealing their surprisingly distinct personalities and why they inspire an almost spiritual devotion in the humans who come to know them. He also explores through vivid historical examples the history of our relationship to the sea, opening a window onto the role humans play in marine die-offs and extinctions. Beautifully written, intellectually provocative, ultimately terrifying, Fire in the Turtle House reveals how emerging diseases wreaking havoc in the global ocean pose an enormous, direct threat to humanity. This is science journalism at its best.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Pulitzer-nominee Davidson (The Best of Enemies) offers the reader an eloquent ecocautionary tale wrapped in a scientific mystery. Sea turtles have thrived for more than 100 million years. Now their existence is threatened not only by human depredation but also by a virulent scourge of unknown origin. In the 1930s, marine biologists began to notice ugly growths on some aquarium turtle specimens. Fibropapillomatosis are nonmalignant tumors that endanger the world's sea turtle population through a range of fatal complications. The pandemic has spread throughout the world's oceans with devastating effects on these docile sea-dwelling reptiles. From remote Pacific atolls to Key West, the author provides an underwater travelogue in search of an answer to the disease's origin. Along the way, we meet an entourage of fascinating marine biologists, veterinarians and dedicated lay people in a common quest for both a cause and a cure. With a quick-flowing narrative sparkling with wit, Davidson also provides anecdotal episodes about other similarly intriguing situations in the natural world. Tales of 18th-century Russian arctic explorers and sea cows, Columbus's experiences with turtles in the Caribbean, captive elephants in Florida, the British Museum's rarities, snake aficionados and poisonous Australian bacterial plumes are deftly combined to add breadth, depth and pathos to the story. Readers interested in ecology and animals, as well as those who value strong prose, will be intrigued and troubled by this book. Photos not seen by PW.

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From Library Journal
A recent trend in science books for the general public is to write the "biography of an idea." Extending the genre to natural history and ecology, this book follows the attempts of marine scientists, veterinarians, and turtle lovers to unravel the causes and find a cure for fibropappilomatosis (FP), a serious epidemic disease currently devastating the green sea turtle population worldwide. Using FP research as a theme, Davidson (The Enchanted Braid: Coming to Terms with Nature on the Coral Reef) discusses marine ecology, disease transmission, overfishing, the migration of alien species between ocean basins, and especially the human factor in the spread of disease and pollution throughout the oceans. The author makes complex material understandable to the lay reader, though the book's rambling quality suggests that he may be trying to cover too much in too few pages. Marine turtles have been generally ignored by the public, overshadowed by whales and dolphins; this book provides some well-deserved attention to the preservation of these valuable animals. Recommended for all public and academic libraries as well as all libraries where there is interest in ecology, marine science, and zoology. Margaret Rioux, MBL/WHOI Lib., Woods Hole, MA
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From Booklist
A horrible disease of unknown origin is ravaging the already diminished ranks of green sea turtles, causing nonmalignant tumors. The tumors obscure their eyes, so they cannot hunt; cover flippers and hamper movement; and in some cases choke the internal organs. The disease was first scientifically described in 1938, but it was apparently rare till the 1980s, when it began to reach epidemic and then pandemic proportions. Davidson tracks the course of the disease as he dives with turtle researchers in Hawaii, observes surgeries to remove tumors in a rehabilitation hospital in Florida, and visits laboratory researchers questing for the cause. The story becomes more urgent as other species of sea turtles turn up with the same disease. Reading like a detective novel, the text draws the reader into the search for the cause of the tumor: Is it a

virus? Parasites? Marine pollution? Following the strands of evidence, the author reminds us of the interrelatedness of life and the environment *Nancy Bent*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Brenda Fairfax:

The particular book Fire in the Turtle House: The Green Sea Turtle and the Fate of the Ocean will bring you to definitely the new experience of reading any book. The author style to elucidate the idea is very unique. If you try to find new book you just read, this book very appropriate to you. The book Fire in the Turtle House: The Green Sea Turtle and the Fate of the Ocean is much recommended to you you just read. You can also get the e-book in the official web site, so you can easier to read the book.

Therese Webb:

A lot of people always spent their own free time to vacation or maybe go to the outside with them friends and family or their friend. Do you know? Many a lot of people spent these people free time just watching TV, or perhaps playing video games all day long. In order to try to find a new activity honestly, that is look different you can read a new book. It is really fun for you. If you enjoy the book you read you can spent all day every day to reading a publication. The book Fire in the Turtle House: The Green Sea Turtle and the Fate of the Ocean it is very good to read. There are a lot of individuals who recommended this book. They were enjoying reading this book. In the event you did not have enough space bringing this book you can buy the e-book. You can m0ore very easily to read this book through your smart phone. The price is not to cover but this book provides high quality.

Thomas Manna:

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Elizabeth Villalobos:

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