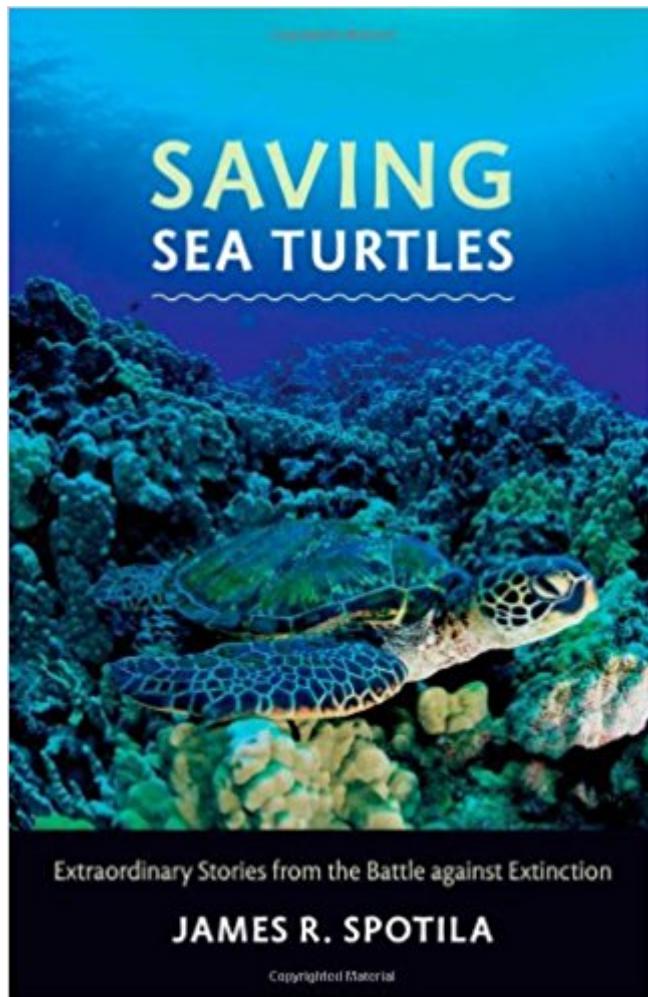


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Saving Sea Turtles: Extraordinary Stories From The Battle Against Extinction



Synopsis

In April 2007, eleven leatherback turtles captured the imagination of the public worldwide as they "raced" from Costa Rica toward the Galápagos Islands. Known as the Great Turtle Race, this event tracked these critically endangered sea turtles, drawing attention to their fragile status and generating data on the turtles vital to efforts to study and protect them. But the Great Turtle Race is just one of many tools marine conservationists use to inform people about the status, biology, and lives of the seven sea turtle species. Due to human actions, once-plentiful sea turtle population levels plummeted throughout much of the twentieth century, stabilizing somewhat only after Archie Carr and Jacques Cousteau popularized their plight. With *Saving Sea Turtles*, award-winning author James R. Spotila picks up where Carr and Cousteau left off, going inside the modern-day conservation movement to tell the tales of today's sea turtle conservationists. He provides a complete overview of sea turtle biology and life cycles, discusses the human and natural world threats they face, and examines the new methods and technologies humans are using to save them. Throughout, Spotila dots the narrative with stories of real-life heroes who risk life and limb to understand, track, and conserve sea turtles across the globe. Spotila has been at the forefront of sea turtle research and conservation for decades. His inspirational story of dedicated individuals, creative endeavors, and adventure reveals what is being done and what else we must do in order to ensure that these fascinating animals continue swimming in the oceans.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I just picked up a copy of this book, Saving Sea Turtles, from author James Spotila at the International Sea Turtle Symposium. He was gracious as a sea turtle "rock star," and even put up with a cardboard cutout of him holding his book (originally part of the sales display) being dressed in a sarong and auctioned off to raise money for supporting students at future symposiums. "Little Jim," as it was named, sold for over five hundred dollars, as I remember. This book is subtitled "Extraordinary stories from the battle against extinction," and that characterizes the structure of this volume. Spotila intertwines his sea turtle-related career with the development of new knowledge regarding sea turtles. It is this mixture of natural history and personal history that makes this volume more interesting than useful. More on this below. There are seven species of sea turtles presently existing on planet Earth. As Spotila writes, "The year 2000 came and went, and the world had the same number of sea turtles as it had in 1900" (p. 199). That certainly is a victory, and one that required active, not passive, intervention. There have been tremendous efforts by a number of dedicated people, working on everything from the protection of nesting beaches, to the reduction of sea turtle bycatch from a variety of fishing practices, to a fundamental change in the value of sea turtles from a source of food or money to a resource for sustainable ecotourism. Still, even with this gargantuan effort, there are fewer turtles of all species today than in 1900. Increased protections, yes. Decreased populations, yes. Species or distinct populations vulnerable to extinction, yes. It's a shallow victory.

I love that Spotila is deeply concerned about sea turtles, as I am, but I wish he had more compassion for people as well. Culturally intolerant comments show up repeatedly and were disturbing. I want to be clear that these comments were culturally intolerant, not racist. There are many, many things we should care about and making sea turtles the one and only concern is questionable. That said, Spotila presents many interesting scientific facts on sea turtles and tells about the research processes that reveal this information. Spotila mentions lots of people and groups involved in sea turtle research and conservation. So many, in fact, that it makes me wonder why he has left some significant and interesting ones out, such as the Cumberland Island Museum, which has been researching sea turtles for decades. I found this especially puzzling as he mentions other nearby islands which have much less of a history of sea turtle research. I myself helped with sea turtle nesting research on Cumberland Island in the 1990s for the Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources and know the interesting information that Spotila could have presented but did not. Spotila has a quirky view of conservation. He goes on and on and on about needing to stop negative human effects on sea turtles, but on page 42 he tells us how he did not want to save

hatchlings being predated on by frigate birds until pressured to do so my students. A hatching saved is a hatching saved, whether it was saved from a human or a frigate bird. Spotila seems to idealize Archie Carr and even says he sees this book as being the next generation of Carr's famous book. Indeed, but of the author's perspective on sea turtles seems to be romanticizing their researches, himself included.

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