



Plankton: Wonders of the Drifting World

By Christian Sardet

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Plankton: Wonders of the Drifting World By Christian Sardet

Ask anyone to picture a bird or a fish and a series of clear images will immediately come to mind. Ask the same person to picture plankton and most would have a hard time conjuring anything beyond a vague squiggle or a greyish fleck. This book will change that forever.

Viewing these creatures up close for the first time can be a thrilling experience—an elaborate but hidden world truly opens up before your eyes. Through hundreds of close-up photographs, *Plankton* transports readers into the currents, where jeweled chains hang next to phosphorescent chandeliers, spidery claws jut out from sinuous bodies, and gelatinous barrels protect microscopic hearts. The creatures' vibrant colors pop against the black pages, allowing readers to examine every eye and follow every tentacle. Jellyfish, tadpoles, and bacteria all find a place in the book, representing the broad scope of organisms dependent on drifting currents.

Christian Sardet's enlightening text explains the biological underpinnings of each species while connecting them to the larger living world. He begins with plankton's origins and history, then dives into each group, covering ctenophores and cnidarians, crustaceans and mollusks, and worms and tadpoles. He also demonstrates the indisputable impact of plankton in our lives. Plankton drift through our world mostly unseen, yet they are diverse organisms that form ninety-five percent of ocean life. Biologically, they are the foundation of the aquatic food web and consume as much carbon dioxide as land-based plants. Culturally, they have driven new industries and captured artists' imaginations.

While scientists and entrepreneurs are just starting to tap the potential of this undersea forest, for most people these pages will represent uncharted waters. *Plankton* is a spectacular journey that will leave readers seeing the ocean in ways they never imagined.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Filled with more than five hundred close-ups of jewel-like diatoms and gelatinous comb jellies, each accompanied by a condensed history and biography, the book is a long overdue introduction to the oceans' ninety-eight percent."

(*New Yorker*)

"Plankton is so hot right now. You may have heard about the stuff that floats around the sea—tiny plant-like organisms called phytoplankton and beasties like small crustaceans called zooplankton—last month when a three-year oceanic expedition released a trove of findings about the global community's composition and diversity. Anyone who is *anyone* has plankton on their mind.

And no one more so than Christian Sardet, who cofounded the expedition, known as Tara Oceans. His positively stunning book *Plankton: Wonders of the Drifting World* features some of the most intriguing, most beautiful organisms that he had the honor of observing at hundreds of sites in the world's oceans. It's the catalog of a mission that has revealed just how diverse and gorgeous the lowly plankton can be, and how indispensable they are to life on Earth."

(*Wired*)

"Striking close-up photos and micrographs take center stage . . . revealing the dazzling diversity of these tiny creatures—from microscopic unicellular organisms to complex crustaceans."

(*Science*)

"In this beautiful book, marine scientist Christian Sardet shows that tiny plankton, not enormous blue whales, are the real stars of the ocean. Macro pictures of the huge variety of plankton forms and short details of their lives force a reconsideration of our view of them as part of an amorphous soup. A celebration of the small, and an unalloyed joy."

(*Nature*)

"Extraordinary."

(*Guardian*)

"Beautiful and informative, and written for a broad audience, *Plankton: Wonders of the Drifting World* should be on everyone's gift list this year."

(*Oceanography*)

"Humans are even more indebted to plankton, the organisms that make up 98 per cent of the ocean's living biomass and which are brought vividly to life in Sardet's microscopic images."

(*Spectator (UK)*)

"A fascinating book that will cause readers to think deeply about plankton and its importance to human and animal life. A biology or general science background is not necessary to read this book; the reader needs

only a desire to learn more about these intriguing organisms."

(*Library Journal*)

"The usual line drawings and photos in invertebrate biology and plankton books rarely hint at how bizarre and colorful these tiny creatures can be. The truly spectacular photographs in this beautiful book reveal the diversity of the free-floating organisms so critical to food webs throughout the world's oceans, from microscopic plants and invertebrate larvae to huge jellyfish and salps. . . . Highly recommended."

(*Choice*)

"A stunningly beautiful work of art that is sure to draw the reader into this world typically missed by all but a few oceanographers and marine biologists."

(Karen Osborn, Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History)

"When people think of the oceans, they usually think of the coast. But the coasts are just a thin ribbon compared to the vast volume of the open ocean. Christian Sardet does an extraordinary job revealing the world of plankton - the diverse organisms that are carried by the currents in the open ocean. These are utterly foreign organisms to most people, but by showing how beautiful they are and describing some of the biology behind their adaptations he succeeds in making them accessible and familiar. Many of these organisms are gelatinous, clear, and incredibly fragile. They look like blobs when they wash up on the beach, but come to life in the pages of *Plankton*."

(Casey Dunn, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Brown University)

"Wow! Simply splendidly wow! Christian Sardet has found that sweet spot where science meets art. The stunning images are a feast for the eyes and the fascinating information is a feast for the mind. *Plankton: Wonders of the Drifting World* will appeal to people from all backgrounds, from those whose fondness for marine biology will be stoked by the depth and breadth of content, to those who may dabble curiously and become enchanted by the stories of the creatures that inhabit this strange world of minibeasts.

Sardet brings alive the history of plankton—both the recent history of the last few hundred years of science, and the deep history of the evolutionary relationships between the incredibly diverse beings that we collectively refer to as plankton. And then chapter by chapter, we get to know these creatures great and small, some spectacularly colored and others as invisible and mysterious as diamonds, the squishy, chewy, and crunchy drifters of the sea. Designed to be a coffee table book, *Plankton* is also the finest and most comprehensive textbook on the subject. This is a book that will gather no dust -- it is just too beautiful to put down!"

(Lisa-ann Gershwin, *Stung!: On Jellyfish Blooms and the Future of the Ocean*)

Winner

(*Festival Mondial de l'Image Sous-Marine*)

"Gorgeously illustrated and fascinating."

(*Explorers Journal*)

About the Author

Christian Sardet is cofounder and emeritus research director of the Laboratory of Cell Biology at the Marine Station of Villefranche-sur-mer, part of the Centre National de la recherche scientifique and Université Pierre et Marie Curie in Paris. He is also cofounder and scientific coordinator of the *Tara Oceans Expedition*, a global voyage to study plankton, and creator of the *Plankton Chronicles* project, www.planktonchronicles.org.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christopher Rayes:

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Michael Albin:

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Sharon Bradley:

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