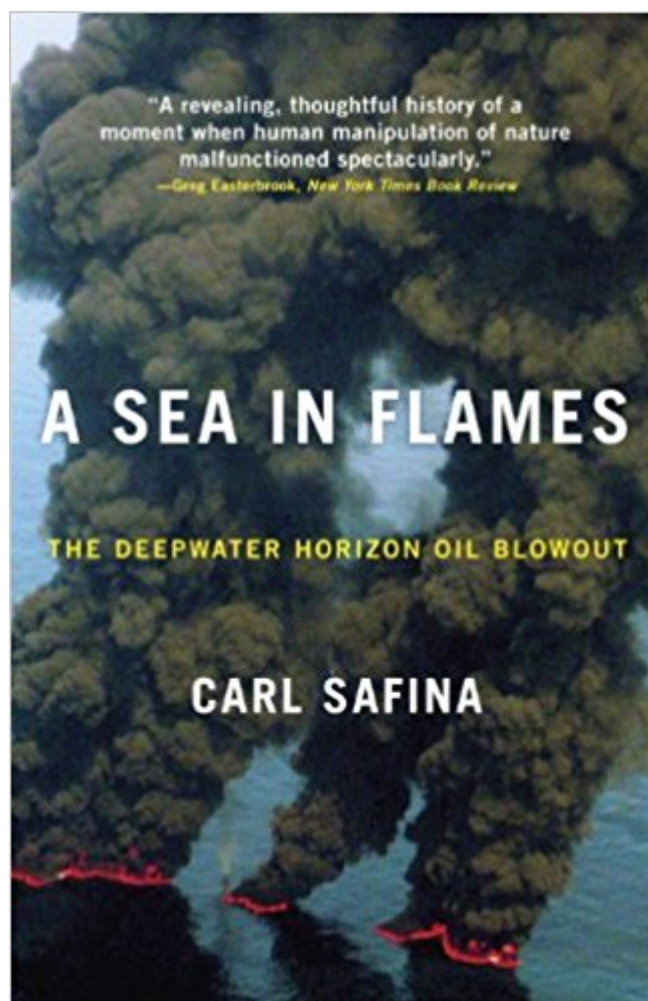


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A Sea In Flames: The Deepwater Horizon Oil Blowout



Synopsis

Carl Safina has been hailed as one of the top 100 conservations of the 20th century (Audubon Magazine) and *A Sea in Flames* is his blistering account of the months-long manmade disaster that tormented a region and mesmerized the nation. Traveling across the Gulf to make sense of an ever-changing story and its often-nonsensical twists, Safina expertly deconstructs the series of calamitous misjudgments that caused the Deepwater Horizon blowout, zeroes in on BP's misstatements, evasions, and denials, reassesses his own reaction to the government's crisis handling, and reviews the consequences of the leak—and what he considers the real problems, which the press largely overlooked. Safina takes us deep inside the faulty thinking that caused the lethal explosion. We join him on aerial surveys across an oil-coated sea. We confront pelicans and other wildlife whose blue universe fades to black. Safina skewers the excuses and the silly jargon—like “junk shot” and “top kill”—that made the tragedy feel like a comedy of horrors—and highlighted Big Oil's appalling lack of preparedness for an event that was inevitable. Based on extensive research and interviews with fishermen, coastal residents, biologists, and government officials, *A Sea In Flames* has some surprising answers on whether it was “Obama's Katrina,” whether the Coast Guard was as inept in its response as BP was misleading, and whether this worst unintended release of oil in history was really America's worst ecological disaster. Impassioned, moving, and even sharply funny, *A Sea in Flames* is ultimately an indictment of America's main addiction. Safina writes: “In the end, this is a chronicle of a summer of pain and hope. Hope that the full potential of this catastrophe would not materialize, hope that the harm done would heal faster than feared, and hope that even if we didn't suffer the absolutely worst—we'd still learn the big lesson here. We may have gotten two out of three. That's not good enough. Because: there'll be a next time.”

From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

MacArthur "Genius" Award-winning oceanographer and conservationist Safina offers an impassioned, on the ground chronicle of the 2010 Gulf oil blowout that surpassed Exxon-Valdez to rank as the worst in history. He breaks down the political and corporate causes and the environmental effects of the spill: the bedding together of government and Big Oil that produced the perfect storm of deregulation and drilling incentives; the intricate chain of misjudgments by BP, Transocean, and Halliburton; the mind-boggling amount of oil—4.9 billion barrels—that gushed into the Gulf of Mexico; the numbers of dolphins, birds, and sea turtles that perished; the rig workers, fishermen, bait shop owners, and restaurateurs who lost their lives or businesses to the spill. Safina's witticisms at times fall flat—he can only refer to Coast Guard Adm. Thad Allen as "the Thadmiral" or refigure BP's initials as "Bullying People," "Billowing Petroleum" or, worst yet, "Bull Poop" so many times before the joke exhausts itself. However, as Safina registers his responses in the wake of the spill, from outrage to cautious hope, his account achieves a broad, reasoned perspective that frames events against the more insidious damage that farm and industrial runoff, canal-digging, levee-building, and rising sea level have wrought on the Gulf and its wetlands. (Apr.)

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"An impressive book that provides a vivid account of how the spill happened, coupled with a report on the anxiety experienced by those who had no way of knowing how long the spill would last or how bad it would get...Readers will find the book accessible and agreeable—a insightful work."

—The New York Times Book Review "Safina offers an impassioned, on the ground chronicle of the 2010 Gulf oil blowout that surpassed Exxon-Valdez to rank as the worst in history. His account achieves a broad, reasoned perspective that frames events against the more insidious damage that farm and industrial runoff, canal-digging, levee-building, and rising sea level have wrought on the Gulf and its wetlands."

—Publishers Weekly "The blowout was awful, but look at the bigger picture, writes Safina in this illuminating, monitory study: "The real catastrophe is the oil we don't spill—the oil we burn, the coal we burn, the gas we burn. And as the reefs dissolve

and the ocean's productivity declines, so will go the food security of hundreds of millions of people." • "Kirkus Reviews" Environmentalist Safina brings his signature compassion, marine expertise, and gorgeous writing to his candidly expressive coverage of the Deepwater Horizon disaster a year after the explosion." • "Booklist Praise for previous works by Carl Safina: "Song for the Blue Ocean: "Engrossing and illuminating . . . passionate and enthralling narrative . . . [A] landmark book." • "New York Times Book Review" "You will never think about fish" or the ocean "the same way again." • "Sylvia Earle, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association" Eye of the Albatross: "One of the most delightful natural history studies in decades." • "The Boston Globe" "A beautiful, awe-inspiring tableau of our world as you've never seen it . . . a moving depiction of how interconnected life on this planet truly is." • "The Christian Science Monitor" "Safina delivers a message full of wonder at the natural world and concern about the fragility of his subject." • "New York Times Book Review" Voyage of the Turtle: "Magnificent... a book that makes the sea air palpable |. A joyful, hopeful book that at the same time, doesn't let us off the hook." • "Los Angeles Times" "Thrums with fascination." • "New York Times Book Review" From the Hardcover edition.

To say this is an important book would be a vast understatement. Safina gets the science and details, including the heartbreak inflicted on the people of the Gulf and he writes of it masterfully . . . A different style than I'm accustomed to from him - present tense, fast paced. The great value of the book lies in the fact that Safina took the truth as he found it and reversed many of his early conclusions and preconclusions. The last fifty pages are stunning. I won't spoil it for you. But for example he finds that fish populations had in many cases increased due to the shut down of fishing due to the spill. Complex and highly instructive. My only quarrel is that he beats on Admiral Thad Allan and NOAA head Barbara Lubchenko for most of the book only to reveal in the last chapters . . . Well I won't give away the story

Safina's account of the BP DWH catastrophe is at turns cynical, rational, indignant and insightful. None of the principals are spared from BP to the USCG to the EPA to NOAA. It's one thing to have an ecological disaster result from base corporate greed; however, to watch the disaster magnified by government latitudes in prevention and incompetence in response leads you to question our way of life and the institutions invested with our public trust.

A Sea in Flames is a good read. Carl Safina, a world-class conservationist, does a good job defining

the high-level cause of the blowout in language for the layman. More in-depth, he brings experienced insight to those dark months of billowing oil when technology, wildlife, politics, the media, and emotions collided as if dragsters meeting head on.

Not a finished or well written book, more a journal of the author's impressions. Although a well-informed author, this book is more like a daily cataloging of his experiences than a well thought out examination of the disaster.

Superbly written. Thorough and honest reporting on the catastrophic event

Love Carl Safina's work!!! Can't wait for his next!!

The book arrived in the time frame given to me and the product was in the condition described by the seller. Thank you!

Carl Safina sounds angry and Lord knows he has a right to be. As a noted author and highly-respected conservationist Safina was simultaneously sickened and emotionally devastated by just about everything he observed in the weeks and months following the deadly explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil drilling rig off the Louisiana coast on April 20, 2010. As soon as he heard about this catastrophe Carl Safina left his Long Island home and headed for the Gulf Coast to investigate. Over the next several months he would record all of his observations for posterity. The result is his riveting new book "A Sea In Flames: The Deepwater Horizon Oil Blowout". Some of the things you will discover about BP's woefully inadequate attempts to plug the leak will shock you. But for those who pay attention to these matters much of what you will learn in this book will probably not surprise you at all. Carl Safina is an unabashed liberal and darn proud of it. But unlike limousine liberals Carl Safina actually walks the walk and talks the talk each and every day of his life. As such, he is uniquely qualified to evaluate both BP's and state and federal government's response to this debacle. He can smell half-truths and inconsistencies a mile away. He has come to the Gulf to get to the bottom of the how and why of this blowout, to assess the extent of the damage to the environment and to understand the implications for those whose lives and livelihoods are directly affected. He will conduct extensive interviews with fishermen, coastal residents, biologists and government officials. And like everyone else he fears the worst but hopes for the best. For the uninitiated Carl Safina offers up a pretty detailed explanation of both the events leading up to the

blowout of the Deepwater Horizon rig and of the explosion itself. Obtaining this information was extremely difficult and time-consuming as it was apparent from the get-go that both BP and various government officials were stonewalling at every turn. As Carl observes on page 176 of "A Sea in Flames" "It could be a cleanup; it could be a cover-up. You can't tell. You can't tell because the Big People are undermining our ability to ask. But let's make it simple, people: Either there's freedom of speech or there isn't. Either there's freedom of assembly or there is isn't. Either there's freedom of movement or there isn't. Either there's freedom, or not." Just who is in charge down here? There seem to be so many obstacles to overcome to get at the truth. Then there is all of that leaking oil. Just how much is leaking? Is it 5000 barrels a day or 60000 barrels a day? How long is it going to take to plug the leak? It all depends on who you talk to. As time goes on it is apparent that Carl Safina is becoming increasingly frustrated with this story. He does not mince words and sometimes I find some of his commentary to be a bit over the top. He has extremely harsh words for a number of individuals including BP's embattled CEO Tony Hayward, Coast Guard Admiral Thad Allen (whom he constantly refers to as "Thadmiral") and NOAA administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenco. Everyone involved wishes they could wave a magic wand and make it all go away. But there is so much more to this story than the explosion of an oil rig and the tragic loss of 11 lives. "A Sea in Flames" also explores the potential impact of this event on the fragile Gulf Coast marshes and for the wildlife that inhabits it. Environmentalists fear the worst and the sight of oil soaked fish, birds, waterfowl and sea turtles is positively heartbreaking. Carl Safina attempts to separate fact from fiction but this is extremely difficult to do. No one can say for sure what the lasting impact is going to be. The same can be said for the fate of hundreds of thousands of residents who reside along the Gulf Coast and rely on the Gulf to make a living. Their lives have been turned upside down and they face an extremely uncertain future. Perhaps this can be best summed up by an extremely moving display Carl happened upon during his travels: "On a lawn, a graveyard of white crosses memorializes those departed: "Beach Sunsets", "Sand Between My Toes", "Marlin", "Sand Castles", "Dolphins", "Bluefin Tuna", "Crabbing", "Shrimp", "Sailing", "Beach Sunrises", "Summer Fun", "Sea Turtles", "Picnics on the Beach", "Floundering", "Flying a Kite", "Sand Dollars", "Oysters On The Half Shell", "Boogie Boarding"; there are about four dozen more." You get the picture.....paradise and the ability to make a living lost in one fell swoop. Your heart goes out to these people. When all is said and done I carried away two important lessons from Carl Safina's exhaustive investigation into the Deepwater Horizon affair. Not surprisingly, BP really had no plan in place to deal with a leak of this magnitude. Skimming, burning and the use of dispersants were simply no match for this situation. The response to this tragedy was essentially the same as it would have been two decades ago but

now we are drilling far deeper wells that necessarily involve far greater risk. This is simply unacceptable and needs to be addressed forthwith. Likewise, according to Admiral Thad Allen the federal government stopped doing R&D on responding to these kinds of potential spills in the 1990's due to "budget cuts". If this is true it would help to explain why the Feds could not do more. As Carl Safina points out time and again in "A Sea of Flames: The Deepwater Horizon Oil Blowout" the American people are as much to blame for all of this as anyone else. Clearly we are all too dependent on cheap fossil fuels and do not seem to understand the true cost of using them. "A Sea In Flames: The Deepwater Horizon Oil Blowout" is a thoughtful and extremely well-written book which I would compare quite favorably to Riki Ott's "Not One Drop: Betrayal and Courage in the Wake of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill" which I read a couple of years ago. Very highly recommended!

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