

**Chasing Science At Sea: Racing Hurricanes Stalking Sharks and Living Undersea with Ocean Experts
(University of Chicago Press, September 2008)**



Summary

To the average office-dweller, marine scientists seem to have the good life: cruising at sea for weeks at a time, swimming in warm coastal waters, living in tropical paradises. But ocean scientists who go to sea will tell you that it is no vacation. Creature comforts are few and the obstacles seemingly insurmountable, yet an abundance of wonder and discovery still awaits those who take to the ocean. *Chasing Science at Sea* immerses readers in the world of those who regularly go to sea—aquanuts living underwater, marine biologists seeking unseen life in the deep ocean, and the tall-ship captains at the helm, among others—and tells the fascinating tale of what life—and science—is like at the mercy of Mother Nature.

With passion and wit, well-known marine scientist Ellen Prager shares her stories as well as those of her colleagues, revealing that in the field ingenuity and a good sense of humor are as essential as water, sunblock, and GPS. Serendipity is invaluable, and while collecting data is the goal, sometimes just getting back to shore means success. But despite the physical hardship and emotional duress that come with the work, optimism and adventure prompt a particularly hardy species of scientist to return again and again to the sea.

Filled with firsthand accounts of the challenges and triumphs of dealing with the extreme forces of nature and the unpredictable world of the ocean, *Chasing Science at Sea* is a unique glimpse below the water line at what it is like and why it is important to study, explore, and spend time in one of our planet's most fascinating and foreign environments.

Early Reviews:

“Prager, the chief scientist at Aquarius Reef Base in the Florida Keys, the world's only undersea research station, uses breezy, accessible prose to evoke the beauty and magic of the underwater world -- as well as the banalities of working as a scientist in an alien environment.” (Wall Street Journal)

"Prager, chief scientist of the world's only undersea station, in Florida, presents a well-organized introduction to marine science enlivened by the story of her own personal path into the profession. Through dozens of anecdotes of wave scientists, marine geologists, tsunami researchers, underwater archaeologists, and many others, Prager casually reveals the vast number and variety of interests pursued in the sea. She speaks to one expert about tumor viruses affecting undersea creatures and another whose specialty is bioluminescence. Everyone has a story of discovery to share, and Prager's ability to zero in on astonishing facts makes for an enormously appealing book. The heavy emphasis on fieldwork allows scientists to stress the more exciting aspects of the professions (from

watching whale sharks feed to skirting the edges of a hurricane). As an unorthodox handbook for would-be ocean scientists, this title is invaluable." (*Booklist*)

"The sea has always inspired tales of adventure and discovery in the face of a vast, unpredictable unknown. Prager, chief scientist at the undersea research station Aquarius Reef Base, in the Florida Keys, uses adventure to frame this collection of firsthand accounts about the challenges faced by marine scientists. But adventure is a far cry from glamour: research often means close quarters on a small ship, usually with bad food, infrequent showers and changeable weather, as well as long days of collecting data. With tongue only slightly in cheek, Prager offers advice for any field scientist: always bring spare pencils and be prepared for things to go wrong, from pirates to valuable equipment getting lost or damaged. In exchange, scientists look forward to the sense-of-wonder moments: swimming with whale sharks, seeing St. Elmo's Fire dance along the rigging. Focused on adventure rather than in-depth science, this entertaining book will appeal most to casual and younger readers." (*Publishers Weekly*)

"Going into the field is an exciting, challenging, and inspiring part of doing ocean science; it is also essential,' writes Prager, currently chief scientist of the undersea research station Aquarius Reef Base. Using anecdotes from colleagues and from her own career, she succeeds in showing the reader that doing science can be both fun and thrilling, especially when it involves work in and on the ocean. She also reminds us that field research is important to doing good science and that learning more about the world's oceans is essential to our future."-Library Journal (*Library Journal*)

"In *Chasing Science at Sea*, Ellen Prager tells amazing stories about her experiences on the water, as well as those of other researchers who have dared face its known and unknown dangers. Through these tales, and from the passion with which she writes about the creatures of the sea, the reader will understand how important the oceans are to our lives."-Jim Fowler, Honorary President of the Explorers Club and cohost of Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom (*Jim Fowler*)

"Dr. Prager's book captures the thrilling personal and professional experiences of being at sea and observing how the ocean works firsthand. Oceanography is a contact science, so it is essential to be out there to understand what is going on in this fast-changing, dynamic environment. Her collection of experiences does an excellent job visualizing the excitement of ocean exploration and discovery. It brought back many fond memories and is just delightful to read."- Robert B. Gagosian, President and CEO, Consortium for Ocean Leadership (*Robert B. Gagosian*)

Thank you, Ellen Prager, for your salute to the ocean and the wild and wonderful people who explore the sea. I laughed out loud while absorbing serious insights about the state of the ocean and what it really takes for scientists to extract deep knowledge from the deep blue. Science fiction is really tame compared to the reality you have captured in this saga of ocean science."-Sylvia A. Earle, Explorer in Residence, National Geographic Society (*Sylvia A. Earle*)

