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Cormorant captures octopus, sends message to watching humans

Posted on April 8, 2010 | 0 Comments

Tags: biodiversity birds conservation endangered species Enric Sala fish food Galapagos oceans

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By Enric Sala

Galapagos Islands--Where on Earth can one see a flightless cormorant capturing an octopus, and two orcas killing a sea turtle?



Flightless Galapagos cormorant captures octopus in front of Mission Blue team! Marine ecologist Enric Sala is among scientists and others on board the *National Geographic Endeavour*, sailing around the Galapagos. They are participating in *Mission Blue*, a conference to discuss strategies and options to rescue Earth's oceans.

Photo by G. Maxwell



An orca hunts a turtle, as observed during the Mission Blue Voyage in the Galapagos.

Photo by TED/James Duncan Davidson

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Extinction nears for Madagascar's radiated tortoise

Madagascar's radiated tortoise--considered one of the most beautiful tortoise species--is rapidly nearing extinction due to rampant hunting for its meat and the illegal pet trade, a team of biologists from the Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA) and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) reported today...

Tue at 3:18am

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About This Blog

Nat Geo News Watch gives you a front-row seat on the issues and solutions at the intersection of the needs of people and the earth's capacity to provide. There are

Where does one have to look attentively to the ground for fear of stepping on marine iguanas as black as the lava rock?

Where do baby sea lions bask in the sun, oblivious to our presence?

Only in Galapagos; and we saw all of this morning. What a privilege!

As Sylvia Earle told me while we were watching them, the beauty of this place is intoxicating.

After the morning walk we had two intense talk sessions, where speakers talked about the vulnerability of the ocean, and about protection. Very inspiring messages, and signs of hope amidst the stories of ocean degradation.

Our environmental chef, [Barton Seaver](#), spoke eloquently about what marine food--fish and shellfish--represents for us. He recommends eating lower in the food chain, and more vegetables. It's good for us and for the ocean.

I couldn't agree more after he named a series of recipes that included oysters and good wine!

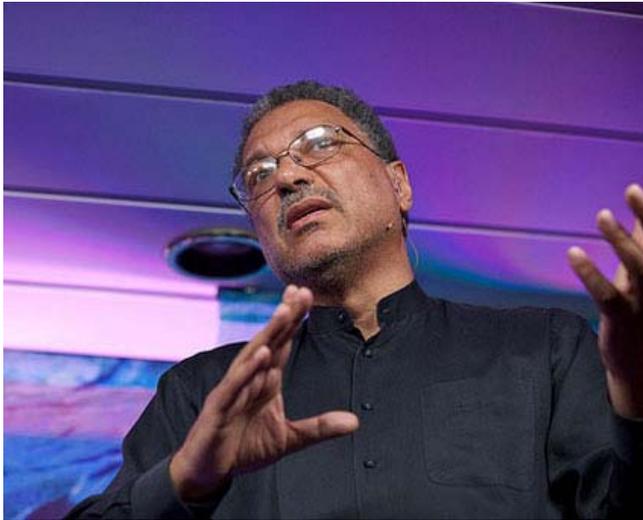


Photo by TED/James Duncan Davidson

Another key moment was when [Daniel Pauly](#) [principal investigator at the Sea Around Us Project, in the photo above] reminded us about our shifting baselines--what you think is natural is not.

Because of continuous environmental degradation, successive generations become used to lower standards. We deplete species and they become rare--and over time we believe they were always rare. As he said, "we believe that the species that disappear are always the abundant ones, not the rare."

How can we capture all these thoughts and the talent on this boat? I hope we can, to help mitigate human impacts in the ocean.



Photo of Enric Sala on board the *National Geographic Endeavour* by TED/James Duncan Davidson

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Mission Blue is the "TED Prize" awarded to National Geographic explorer-in-residence [Sylvia Earle](#) in 2009. Earle's TED wish: "I wish you would use all means at your disposal -- films! expeditions! the web! more! -- to ignite public support for a global network of marine protected areas, hope spots large enough to save and restore the ocean, the blue heart of the planet."



Marine Ecologist [Enric Sala](#) is a National Geographic Fellow. A 2005 Aldo Leopold Leadership Fellow, a 2006 Pew Fellow in Marine Conservation, and a 2008 Young Global Leader at the World Economic Forum in Davos, he also received the 2006 Prince of Asturias Award for Communication and Humanities with National Geographic. Sala's experience and scientific expertise contributes to his service on scientific advisory boards of environmental organizations.

More blog posts by Enric Sala

Lifegiving Power of the Sea

"We have learned more about the ocean in the last half century than in all of preceding history," says Sylvia Earle, marine biologist. "But at the same time, more has changed." [Read the full interview.](#)

National Geographic [Galápagos Islands Photo Gallery](#)

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