

= The Log from the Sea of Cortez =

The Log from the Sea of Cortez is an English @-@ language book written by American author John Steinbeck and published in 1951 . It details a six @-@ week (March 11 ? April 20) marine specimen @-@ collecting boat expedition he made in 1940 at various sites in the Gulf of California (also known as the Sea of Cortez) , with his friend , the marine biologist Ed Ricketts . It is regarded as one of Steinbeck 's most important works of non @-@ fiction chiefly because of the involvement of Ricketts , who shaped Steinbeck 's thinking and provided the prototype for many of the pivotal characters in his fiction , and the insights it gives into the philosophies of the two men .

The Log from the Sea of Cortez is the narrative portion of an unsuccessful earlier work , Sea of Cortez : A Leisurely Journal of Travel and Research , which was published by Steinbeck and Ricketts shortly after their return from the Gulf of California , and combined the journals of the collecting expedition , reworked by Steinbeck , with Ricketts ' species catalogue . After Ricketts ' death in 1948 , Steinbeck dropped the species catalogue from the earlier work and republished it with a eulogy to his friend added as a foreword .

= = Journey = =

= = = Background = = =

Steinbeck met Ricketts in 1930 through a shared interest in marine biology . Ricketts made a modest living as a professional biologist by preparing and selling specimens of intertidal fauna to laboratories and universities from his small lab in Cannery Row , and Steinbeck spent many hours at the lab in Ricketts ' company . Ricketts was the inspiration for the boozy , good @-@ hearted character of " Doc " , who appeared in the novels Steinbeck set in and around Monterey , and elements of his personality are mirrored by many other important characters in Steinbeck 's novels .

Both Steinbeck and Ricketts had achieved some measure of security and recognition in their professions by 1939 : Steinbeck had capitalized on his first successful novel , Tortilla Flat , with the publication of The Grapes of Wrath , and Ricketts had published Between Pacific Tides , which became the definitive handbook for the study of the intertidal fauna of the Pacific Coast of the coterminous United States . Steinbeck was exhausted and looking for a new start ; Ricketts was looking for a new challenge . The two men had long thought of producing a book together and , in a change of pace for both of them , they began work on a handbook of the common intertidal species of the San Francisco Bay Area . The book came to nothing , but it spurred them into making a trip to the Sea of Cortez . Initially they planned a motoring trip to Mexico City as a break from their work on the handbook , but as time went on they became more interested in a collecting trip around the Gulf of California . Ricketts noted in his journal :

Jon said , " If you have an objective , like collecting specimens , it puts so much more direction onto a trip , makes it more interesting . " ... Then he said , " We 'll do a book about it that 'll more than pay the expenses of the trip . "

A specimen @-@ collecting expedition along the Pacific Coast and down into Mexico provided them with a chance to relax , and , for Steinbeck , a chance for a brief escape from the controversy mounting around The Grapes of Wrath . Ricketts , suffering as a result of the breakup of his long @-@ term relationship with a married woman in Monterey , was glad to get away too . They planned to collect specimens from the rock and tide pools and the shore line uncovered between tides which would allow them build up a picture of the macro level ecosystem in the Gulf . The preserved specimens of the fauna they collected could be identified and catalogued or sold on their return .

Early in 1940 , Steinbeck and Ricketts hired a Monterey Bay sardine fishing boat , the Western Flyer , with a four @-@ man crew , and spent six weeks travelling the coast of the Gulf of California collecting biological specimens . Along with Ricketts and the four crew members mentioned in the book , Steinbeck was accompanied by his wife , Carol . Steinbeck hoped that the trip would help rescue their failing marriage , but it seems to have had the opposite effect : the marriage ended

soon after they returned . Steinbeck 's lawyer and friend , Toby Street , was also on board as far as San Diego .

= = = Account of the expedition = = =

The Western Flyer was a 75 @-@ foot (23 m) purse seiner , crewed by Tony Berry , the captain ; " Tex " Travis , the engineer ; and two able seamen , " Sparky " Enea and " Tiny " Colletto . Stocked with supplies , collecting equipment and a small library , the boat put out to sea on the afternoon of March 11 , 1940 . They started in a leisurely fashion down the Pacific coast , fishing as they went . They refueled at San Diego and on March 17 passed Point San Lazaro and made their way down the Pacific side of the Baja California peninsula . They put in at Cabo San Lucas , on the tip of the peninsula , where they were greeted by Mexican officials and began collecting specimens . The collecting team was initially planned to consist of Steinbeck and Ricketts alone , but Carol and eventually Enea and Colletto joined them , allowing for a much more efficient collection at each stop .

The battles with their outboard motor , referred to pseudonymously as the " Hansen Sea @-@ Cow " , which would feature as a humorous thread throughout the journal , began immediately and continued the next day when they moved further round the coast to El Pulmo Reef :

Our Hansen Sea @-@ Cow was not only a living thing but a mean , irritable , contemptible , vengeful , mischievous , hateful living thing [it] loved to ride on the back of a boat , trailing its propeller daintily in the water while we rowed ... when attacked with a screwdriver [it] fell apart in simulated death ... It loved no one , trusted no one , it had no friends .

Making for Isla Espiritu Santo they faced strong winds and , rather than attempting to land at the island , they anchored at Pescadero on the mainland . On March 20 they returned to the island and spent the day collecting . A visit from some natives of La Paz that evening , coupled with the exhaustion of their supplies of beer , encouraged them to make for the town the next morning . They spent three days collecting with the assistance of the locals , and enjoyed the hospitality of La Paz . In writing about the town , Steinbeck briefly recounts the story that he would later rewrite as *The Pearl* .

On March 23 , they moved on to San José Island , where the " Sea @-@ Cow " again let them down : they wanted it to bring the boat close to Cayo islet , but they ended up rowing the boat , with the outboard still attached , after it failed to start . The next day , Easter Sunday , they continued on to Marcial Reef . After collecting specimens there , they sailed to Puerto Escondido where they met some holidaying Mexicans who invited them on a hunting trip . They accepted , wanting to see the interior of the peninsula , and enjoyed two days in the company of the Mexicans , eating , drinking and listening to unintelligible dirty jokes in Spanish . Due to the relaxed attitudes of their hosts , no actual hunting took place , which pleased Steinbeck :

Furthermore , they had taught us the best of all ways to go hunting , and we shall never use any other . We have , however , made one slight improvement on their method : we shall not take a gun , thereby obviating the last remote possibility of having the hunt cluttered up with game .

Puerto Escondido proved to be a rich collecting ground , and after nine days in the Gulf , they had to scale back their collecting ambitions owing to lack of space for the specimens . It had already become clear that there were certain species that were ubiquitous in the region : some species of crabs , sea anemones , limpets , barnacles and sea cucumbers were found at every stop , and the sun star , *Heliaster kubiniji* , the sea urchin , *Arbacia incisa* , and bristleworms of the *Eurythoe* genus were common .

Leaving Puerto Escondido , they continued up the coast to Loreto , where they restocked their supplies . They then visited the Coronado Islands , Concepción Bay and San Lucas Cove , collecting specimens at each stop . The work was exhausting ; Steinbeck wrote in his letters that he had little time for sleep because the collecting and preparation took so long . In the cramped quarters of the boat , all the equipment had to be set up and stowed each time the boat moved to a new anchorage , which made the work of cataloguing and processing the specimens doubly arduous .

Making their way to San Carlos Bay , they bypassed the town of Santa Rosalía , and entered the sparsely populated upper Gulf , stopping at San Francisquito Bay . On April 1 , they made for Bahía de los Ángeles , which was to be the last stop on the peninsula before they crossed to the mainland coast . On April 2 they rounded Isla Ángel de la Guarda , and anchored in Puerto Refugio for the night . The next morning they made for Tiburón Island , on the eastern side of the Gulf . They collected specimens at Red Point Bluff , keeping an eye out for the Seri , a local tribe who they had heard were rumored to be cannibals :

In our usual condition of hunger , it would have been a toss @-@ up whether Seris ate us or we ate Seris . The one who got in the first bite would have had the dinner , but we never did see a Seri .

Although the crew were eager to get to Guaymas as soon as possible , it was too far for a single day 's journey , so the next day they put in at Puerto San Carlos , where they collected . Early the next morning they made the short run to Guaymas .

They left Guaymas on the morning of April 8 and , only an hour out , encountered a Japanese fishing fleet dredging the bottom . Although initially wary , the crew of one of the boats welcomed Steinbeck and Ricketts on board and allowed them to select some specimens from the catch , though to the annoyance of the crew of the Western Flyer , Ricketts and Steinbeck forgot to get any fish to eat . Taking leave of the fleet , they made for the Estero de la Luna , a huge estuary where Ricketts and Steinbeck became lost in fog while out on a collecting expedition , after the " Sea @-@ Cow " once again refused to run . Although spooked by the episode , they were able to navigate back to the Western Flyer once the fog cleared .

Continuing down to Agiabampo lagoon , they stopped to collect along the shores , and then recrossed the Gulf by night , putting in at San Gabriel Bay for a last collection before making for home . On the afternoon of April 12 they secured all the equipment and laid in a course for San Diego .

The collecting trip had been very successful : they catalogued over 500 species of the fauna of the shores of the Gulf ; recorded a species of brittle star , *Ophiophragmus marginatus* , last recorded nearly 100 years earlier ; and discovered about 50 new species . Three species of sea anemone they discovered were named for them by Dr. Oscar Calgren at the Lund University 's Department of Zoology in Sweden : *Palythoa rickettsii* , *Isometridium rickettsi* , and *Phialoba steinbecki* .

= = Book = =

= = = Sea of Cortez = = =

The year after their return from the trip Steinbeck and Ricketts published *Sea of Cortez : A Leisurely Journal of Travel and Research* , in which Steinbeck combined the daily journals of the trip with Ricketts ' annotated specimen list . The title " Sea of Cortez " was preferred to the " Gulf of California " as a better @-@ sounding and a more exciting name . It was assumed by many that Steinbeck had kept a journal during the trip and that the book was merely an amalgamation of his log and Ricketts ' taxonomic list ; but the two authors revealed that the journal was Ricketts ' . Although Steinbeck had added to it during the journey , he had done the real work of editing it after they returned . The log was based on what Ricketts called the Verbatim Transcript , an account of the trip he had compiled from the various notes he kept during the trip . Much of the final narrative was little changed from Ricketts ' notes ; Steinbeck shifted from the first person singular to the first person plural and gave some of Ricketts ' drier prose a poetic twist , but many of the scenes remained almost unchanged from the daily journal . The suggestion by Steinbeck 's editor , Pascal Covici , that the title page should state that Steinbeck was the author and add that the appendices were by Ricketts met with blunt opposition from Steinbeck : " I not only disapprove of your plan ? I forbid it " . Steinbeck also drew upon the journal of Tony Berry , mostly to confirm dates and times .

The book is a travelogue and biological record , but also reveals the two men 's philosophies : it dwells on the place of humans in the environment , the interconnection between single organisms and the larger ecosystem , and the themes of leaving and returning home . A number of ecological

concerns , rare in 1940 , are voiced , such as an imagined but horrific vision of the long term damage that the Japanese bottom fishing trawlers are doing to the sea bed . Although written as if it were the journal kept by Steinbeck during the voyage , the book is to some extent a work of fiction : the journals are not Steinbeck 's , and his wife , who had accompanied him on the trip , is not mentioned (though at one point Steinbeck slips and mentions the matter of food for seven people) . Since returning home is a theme throughout the narrative , the inclusion of his wife , a symbol of home , would have dissipated the effect . Steinbeck and Ricketts are never mentioned by name but are amalgamated into the first person " we " who narrate the log .

A version of Ricketts ' philosophical work " Essay on Non @-@ teleological Thinking " , which to some extent expressed both authors ' outlooks , was included as the Easter Sunday chapter . Although Steinbeck altered the original , Ricketts expressed his satisfaction with the result . Becoming known as the " Easter Sunday Sermon " , it explores the gap between the methods of science and faith and the common ground they share , and it expounds on the holistic approach both men took to ecology :

It is advisable to look from the tide pool to the stars and then back to the tide pool again .

Steinbeck enjoyed writing the book ; it was a challenge to apply his novel @-@ writing skills to a scientific subject . However , he doubted from an early stage that the book would sell well . He considered it would be a good read , but not for the " take @-@ a @-@ book @-@ to @-@ bed public " . As he progressed further , he began to see that the book would have very limited appeal , but equally he was convinced that it was a good book and the best work he had done . He was happy that it took his writing in a new direction and would confound the attempts of the critics to pigeonhole him , and , with a slightly masochistic joy he looked forward to their " rage and contempt " . In that , he was proved incorrect ; the reviews were mixed , but largely favorable , focusing on his affirmation of humankind 's place in the wider environment , and picking up on the excitement Steinbeck and Ricketts felt for their subject . Most felt that even though there were moments when Steinbeck was at his best , the blending of philosophy , travelogue and biological recording made for an uneven read :

Thus the reader will be enjoying the chase of Tethys the sea @-@ hare when all of a sudden he will find himself becalmed in a soupy discussion of teleology . Most readers , one suspects , will prefer Tethys the sea @-@ hare .

Those critics who looked beyond the narrative portion were impressed by Ricketts ' catalogue . Marine biologist Joel W. Hedgpeth , writing in the San Francisco Chronicle , predicted it would be indispensable for students of the marine invertebrates of the Gulf of California . Steinbeck was right about the lack of popular appeal , however : the unusual mixture of taxonomic data and travelogue meant the book struggled to find an audience . Few copies were printed and it was soon all but forgotten . The country 's entry into the war and plummeting book sales also had an effect . Ricketts ' share of the revenues from sales did not even provide him with the money to pay back Steinbeck for financing the journey .

= = = Reissue = = =

Ricketts was killed in 1948 when a train collided with his car while he was crossing the rail tracks . Ricketts ' death severely hurt Steinbeck : " he was part of my brain for 18 years " . Although Steinbeck had moved to New York shortly after the journey and the two men had not seen as much of each other in the following years , they had corresponded by mail and had been planning a further expedition , this time northwards to the Aleutian Islands .

In 1951 Steinbeck republished the narrative portion of Sea of Cortez as The Log from the Sea of Cortez , dropping Ricketts ' species list and adding a preface entitled " About Ed Ricketts " , a biography of his friend .

Pascal Covici had always regarded Ricketts as a hanger @-@ on and had been keen to deny his authorship of the original book . He pushed Steinbeck to get Ricketts ' son , Ed Jr . , to sign over the copyright to the narrative portion of the book , so that the reissued version could credit Steinbeck alone . Covici suggested a 15 ? 20 % share of the royalties as a recompense ; but Ed Jr . , knowing

that the narrative was largely Ricketts ' own , insisted on 25 % . With the copyright secured , Ricketts ' name was dropped from the cover , though the title page acknowledged that the book was " the narrative portion of the Sea of Cortez by John Steinbeck and E.F. Ricketts " , and throughout his life , Steinbeck insisted on referring to the work as a collaboration . The republished narrative is unchanged from the original published in Sea of Cortez .

The republished version enjoyed greater success than the original . Although , by the time of his death in 1968 , Steinbeck 's reputation was at an all - time low owing to his mediocre output during the last decades of his life and his support for American involvement in Vietnam , his books have slowly regained their popularity . The Log from the Sea of Cortez became an important work within his oeuvre , not only as an interesting travelogue and work of non - fiction , but for its first - hand account of Ed Ricketts , the man whose thinking had so much influence on the course of Steinbeck 's writing and on whom he had based so many of his pivotal characters . Whereas earlier critics mostly assumed that " Mr. Ricketts contributed some of the biology , and Mr. Steinbeck all of the prose " , the publication of Ricketts ' rediscovered original notes in 2003 has revealed how closely Steinbeck followed Ricketts ' journal . This has forced a re - evaluation of how far it is fair to attribute authorship of the narrative portion of Sea of Cortez to Steinbeck , and has caused critics to view the removal of Ricketts ' name from the cover as reflecting badly on Steinbeck .

Travels With Charley : In Search of America , another non - fiction travelogue which Steinbeck wrote in 1962 , is seen as a more rounded view of the author late in life , but The Log from the Sea of Cortez is regarded as showing the direct influence of Ed Ricketts and his philosophies on Steinbeck , and provides clues to the underlying rationales for some events in his novels . In particular , " About Ed Ricketts " reveals how closely he was tied to the characters in Steinbeck 's novels : parts are taken almost verbatim from descriptions of " Doc " in Cannery Row . The book is also important for seeing something of Ed Ricketts himself . It was the only example of his philosophical writings published in his lifetime . The " Essay on Non - teleological Thinking " was part of a trilogy of philosophical essays he had written before the trip , and which , with Steinbeck 's help , he continued to try to have published until his death . As a travelogue it captures a lost world . Even as they were making the trip , a new hotel was being built in La Paz . Steinbeck bemoaned the coming of tourism :

Probably the airplanes will bring week - enders from Los Angeles before long , and the beautiful poor bedraggled old town will bloom with a Floridian ugliness .

Today , Cabo San Lucas is home to luxury hotels and the houses of American rock stars , and many of the small villages have become suburbs of the larger towns of the Gulf , but people still visit , attempting to capture something of the spirit of the leisurely journey Steinbeck and Ricketts took around the Sea of Cortez .