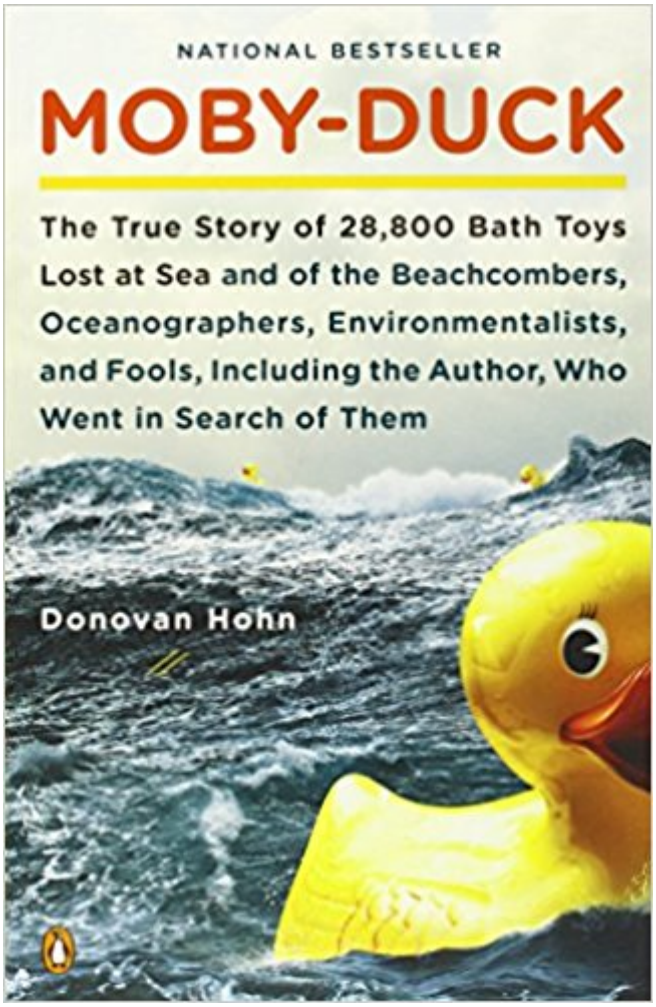
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Moby-Duck: The True Story Of 28,800 Bath Toys Lost At Sea & Of The Beachcombers, Oceanograp Hers, Environmentalists & Fools Including The Author Who Went In Search Of Them




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Synopsis

A compulsively readable narrative of whimsy and curiosity- "adventurous, inquisitive, and brightly illuminating" (Janet Maslin, The New York Times).When the writer Donovan Hohn heard of the mysterious loss of thousands of bath toys at sea, he figured he would interview a few oceanographers, talk to a few beachcombers, and read up on Arctic science and geography. But questions can be like ocean currents: wade in too far, and they carry you away. Hohn’s accidental odyssey pulls him into the secretive arena of shipping conglomerates, the daring work of Arctic researchers, the lunatic risks of maverick sailors, and the shadowy world of Chinese toy factories. Moby-Duck is a journey into the heart of the sea and an adventure through science, myth, the global economy, and some of the worst weather imaginable.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Whimsical curiosity begets a quixotic odyssey and troubling revelations about plastics polluting the seas in former high school teacher and journalist Hohn’s charming account of what he learned searching for 28,800 rubber bath toys lost at sea in 1992. His curiosity, prompted by a student’s quirky essay, begins in 2005 around Sitka, Alaska, where yellow "duckies," frogs, turtles, and beavers washed up after three-story waves buffeted a container ship traveling from China to America. Hohn, a senior editor at Harper’s magazine, eventually tracks more rogue ducks bobbing up from isolated Gore Point, Alaska, to Maine beaches. The author’s quest leads him to a

research vessel trawling for degraded plastic in Hawaiian seas, to the Chinese factory where the toys were manufactured, aboard a container vessel traversing the same route as the original ship (a particularly hair-raising section), and finally to the high Arctic to study the science of oceanic drift. Packed with seafaring lore and astute reporting, this enthralling narrative is the Moby Dick of drifting ducks. (Mar.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Starred Review Like Bill Bryson on hard science, or John McPhee with attitude, journalist Hohn travels from beaches to factories to the northern seas in pursuit of a treasure that mystifies as much as it provokes. His quest is to determine what happened to a load of 28,800 Chinese manufactured plastic animals in a container that fell off a ship en route to Seattle in 1992. HohnÃ¢â ¬â„¢s inquiry leads him to 10 Little Rubber Ducks (2005), childrenÃ¢â ¬â„¢s author Eric CarleÃ¢â ¬â„¢s idealized board-book version, and also to the plastic-strewn beaches of an Alaskan island, a Hong Kong toy fair, and the Sesame Street origins of the rubber duckÃ¢â ¬â„¢s popularity. By turns thoughtful, bemused, or shocked, Hohn finds the story growing beyond his wildest visions as he learns about the science of ocean currents and drift and the lure of cheap plastic in a consumer culture that has dangerously lost its way. The resulting book is a thoroughly engaging environmental/travel title that crosses partisan divides with its solid research and apolitical nature. Rubber ducks as harmless, ubiquitous symbols of childhood? Not anymore, not by a long shot. This dazzles from start to finish. --Colleen Mondor --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

After finishing Moby-Duck by Donovan Hohn I give it 5 Rubber Ducks. Perfect stocking stuffer for the Good Morning Gloucester Friends of Rubber Duck (GMGFORD). A spellbinding journey that leapfrogs (see green frogs below) across the world searching for the illusive Rubber Duck. The Gloucester Bookstore and Toad Hall in Rockport have been told to stock this book.First the technicalities: On the night of January 10, 1992, an enormous container ship from China, crossing the north Pacific, ran into a storm and eventually lost several tractor trailer sized containers to the sea. This actually happens quite often and some people get their kicks hunting down Adidas sneakers, or the ten thousand catcherÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s mitts or hockey sticks that bob to the surface after the ocean pops the container open. But on this Friday night the cargo was 7,200 cartons of bath toys containing a green frog, a blue turtle, a red beaver, and, wait for it, a rubber duck (This makes 28,800 floating bath toys.). But forget those other toys, we focus on the 7,200 Rubber Ducks. These Rubber Ducks are just like the GMG Rubber Duck. Born in a blow mold in

China. Our Rubber Duck made the trip safely much earlier. Her container ship pulled into Seattle in 1984, was offloaded to a truck destined for Shelcore Inc in Somerset, New Jersey. It then was sent to a novelty shop on Cape Ann where David Platt of Rockport purchased it to decorate the bathroom. For fifteen years Rubber Duck left a sheltered life before she met Homie the Seagull down on Granite Pier and we all know where that part of the story has ended up ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â|But back to the roaming 7,200 rubber ducks. Donovan Hohn read an article about them and the search for information took over his life from 2005 to 2008. One month he would be pulling a red beaver off the beach of an Alaskan Island, the next month he would be on an ice breaker travelling the northwest passage above Canada. Along the way Donovan learns a lot about ocean currents, maritime regulations, the weather, the climate, the sailor Ishmael of Moby Dick fame, as well as how to be a father.He meets a lot of people, most of whom think he is a bit daft, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Has thou seen the White Whale?ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Has thou seen the Rubber Duck?ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• A page turner to the end, you will find yourself a bit more knowledgable about the ocean after having read it. Do you know about the great gyre, the garbage patch, swirling in the Pacific to the North of Hawaii? I thought I did but was surprised that the real floating dead zone of plastic is much different than what is reported. Hohn brings no agenda to his search for the Rubber Duck. He started with a simple question, did a Rubber Duck really go through the Bering Strait, up over the Northwest passage, and land on a beach in England? In the end, it isnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t the answer, but the journey that matters, and we all learn a lot by tagging along.

I am reading Moby-Duck, by Donovan Hohn. I find it quite interesting and informative, especially on the topics of ecology and ocean currents. When I started making notes of pages that had bits of information and quotes I wanted to reference later, I did not expect the large volume of references I would find. About half the pages have something. One quote I especially like is, "Why do we like to walk on the beach?...all the cells inside our bodies realize they’re close to their mom." This is from Curtis Ebbesmeyer, retired oceanographer, in Seattle, Washington. As an amateur beachcomber (I do it because I love it,) I was fascinated with Moby-Duck because there were explanations of the movement of flotsam and jetsam on the ocean waves and currents. I have never read any other account that explained how and why things drift to their landing places. In Moby-Duck I found there even is a publication about beachcombing--Beachcombers’ Alert! published by Curtis Ebbesmeyer. Book review readers will likely know by now that the theme of Moby-Duck is an account of part of a shipment of plastic bath toys broken loose from their bindings and catapulted into the Pacific Ocean

during a dramatic storm, January 10, 1992. They were in huge containers, 8 feet wide by 20 or 40 feet long. At least one container burst in the crash, the rubber toys spilled into the sea. The story tracks the routes of winds and ocean currents that move water and materials around in the oceans. Along with the bath toys, I read about shipments on other ships that break loose and crash into the deep--shoes, sneakers and sandals, computer monitors, things that float. "Ghost nets" were disturbing. They are high-seas drift nets, 15 miles long! Broken loose from fishermen, these nylon nets roll up into a huge ball, tangling animals, catching on coral reefs, killing anything in their paths. I learned about chemicals that break down from lost or discarded items floating in sea water, and what they can do to plants and sea creatures. I was disturbed to find that beach clean-up operations get grants from polluters like BP, Chevron, or Dow Chemical. These grants give a positive twist to the corporate reputations while nothing is done to stop the pollution they cause. Oddly enough, half way through the book, the bath toys were taken off the market, after they were found to have a high level of lead. On investigation, Hohn found that it is up to the manufacturers to make sure a toy is safe, the government agents find out about the problems later. The vast majority of toys found in US stores are made in China, in sweat shops. Shouldn’t we have some suspicion about the quality of what we get from such sources? I have not finished reading the book yet. I’ll keep reading it. It is like no other I have found. I don’t expect a solution to the problem of pollution of the oceans, but an education is helpful.

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