



Flotsametrics and the Floating World: How One Man's Obsession Revolutionized Ocean Science

Curtis Ebbesmeyer

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Pioneering oceanographer Curtis Ebbesmeyer unravels the mystery of marine currents, uncovers the astonishing story of flotsam, and changes the world's view of trash, the ocean, and our global environment.

Curtis Ebbesmeyer is no ordinary scientist. He's been a consulting oceanographer for multinational firms and a lead scientist on international research expeditions, but he's never held a conventional academic appointment. He seized the world's imagination as no other scientist could when he and his worldwide network of beachcomber volunteers traced the ocean's currents using thousands of sneakers and plastic bath toys spilled from storm-tossed freighters.

Now, for the first time, Ebbesmeyer tells the story of his lifelong struggle to solve the sea's mysteries while sharing his most surprising discoveries. He recounts how flotsam has changed the course of history - leading Viking mariners to safe harbors, Columbus to the New World, and Japan to open up to the West - and how it may even have made the origin of life possible. He chases icebergs and floating islands; investigates ocean mysteries from ghost ships to a spate of washed-up severed feet on Canadian beaches; and explores the enormous floating "garbage patches" and waste-heaped "junk beaches" that collect the flotsam and jetsam of industrial society.

Finally, Ebbesmeyer reveals the rhythmic and harmonic order in the vast oceanic currents called gyres - "the heartbeat of the world" - and the threats that global warming and disintegrating plastic waste pose to the seas...and to us.

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