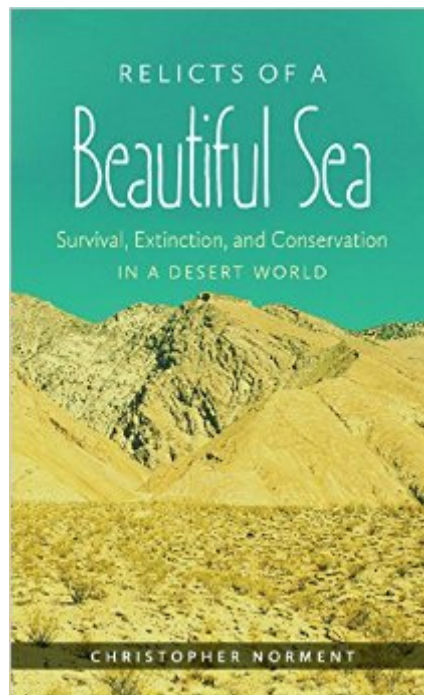


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# Relicts Of A Beautiful Sea: Survival, Extinction, And Conservation In A Desert World



## Synopsis

Along a tiny spring in a narrow canyon near Death Valley, seemingly against all odds, an Inyo Mountain slender salamander makes its home. "The desert," writes conservation biologist Christopher Norment, "is defined by the absence of water, and yet in the desert there is water enough, if you live properly." *Relicts of a Beautiful Sea* explores the existence of rare, unexpected, and sublime desert creatures such as the black toad and four pupfishes unique to the desert West. All are anomalies: amphibians and fish, dependent upon aquatic habitats, yet living in one of the driest places on earth, where precipitation averages less than four inches per year. In this climate of extremes, beset by conflicts over water rights, each species illustrates the work of natural selection and the importance of conservation. This is also a story of persistence--for as much as ten million years--amid the changing landscape of western North America. By telling the story of these creatures, Norment illustrates the beauty of evolution and explores ethical and practical issues of conservation: what is a four-inch-long salamander worth, hidden away in the heat-blasted canyons of the Inyo Mountains, and what would the cost of its extinction be? What is any lonely and besieged species worth, and why should we care?

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Great synthesis of information about the focal species that is unavailable elsewhere. Easy and enjoyable read for a nonfiction book. Conservation biologists should have a look at it - especially those studying desert organisms.

I have read, and recommend, all of Christopher Norment's books, but *Relicts of a Beautiful Sea* is his best yet. Norment combines the patient insights of a scientist, the thoughtful questions of an investigative reporter, and the elegiac sensitivities of a man at home in the desert wild "all in the service of some of the most isolated and endangered fish and amphibians in the arid basin and range country east of the Sierra Nevada. The book offers the best of what creative nonfiction can give: a thorough education in forgotten worlds in the companionable prose of a writer who, like John Donne, both thinks and feels very deeply.

a lyrical exploration of why conservation matters, using the improbable existence of amphibians and fish in one of earth's driest deserts as examples. Norment writes poetically and clearly and it was over before I was ready.

This book combines science, history, and the personal experiences and perspective of the author in a beautifully written way.

Open your eyes and see who the real natives are in the American west and how we humans are destroying them.

Wonderful stories and writing. Prosaic nature writing by a scientist. I love this book.

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