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Blue Ocean Writings

Diary

Carl Safina's voyages around the world have brought him face-to-face with giant, car-sized Leatherback turtles, hundreds of thousands of nesting albatrosses, and pods of dolphins facing death from tuna fishing. Scroll below to read some of his diary entries:

Notes From the World Economic Forum, Davos, Switzerland

In January '06 I was invited to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. This unique meeting hosts CEOs of billion-dollar-plus multinational businesses (membership costs \$50,000), nearly two-dozen heads of state, and luminaries in the global marketplace of ideas.

I was asked to brief conferees on the status and future of fisheries and the oceans. Noted environmentalists at the Forum included Jane Goodall, Amory Lovins, and Lester R. Brown and although almost all sessions were panel discussions, Jane Goodall and I had the luxury of being the only presenters in our respective sessions. We were each able to speak and take questions for nearly an hour. I focused on the economic and policy aspects of fisheries, such as the need to end subsidies and overcapitalization and the need to create a legal framework for the global high-seas commons.

Major themes of the conference included the idea that the "American Century" is ending and economic power and investment opportunity is shifting toward China and India. Another theme was that the "only" two issues in the world that are getting worse are: human rights and the environment. Increased hurricane intensity was discussed as an emerging global environmental threat. Most of the people there (who are mostly wealthy) seemed to believe that wealth helps improve environmental problems—except climate change, which gets worse with development. There was discussion about how climate change mitigation can be profitable and attendees noted that to address global warming through business the CEO interest is vital, and awareness throughout the company is essential. (Same seems to hold for government.)

Waste and pollution were categorized as "unsalable production" and nature appreciated as "natural capital." There was little regard for biological diversity, species extinctions, or life as life per se. If some creature or plant couldn't be made into a commodity, it seemed to garner little interest. There was little empathy for animals or species, little sentiment about their inherent right to exist.

The conference touched on the need to develop new energy sources to increase global security and reduce global warming. Bill Clinton, in his plenary, when asked what his concerns were, replied, "First, I worry about global warming, because of its potential to destroy civilizations." He was the only one who

got a standing ovation. There seemed few if any global warming skeptics present—and few fans of the Bush administration.

In addition to hard-nosed multinational executives, various stars of business, politics, and show business attended—everyone from Bill Gates to Angelina and Brad to Mohammed Ali. The Forum was an opportunity to see, meet, and network with many otherwise inaccessible people, and I came home energized with new ideas and new collaborative possibilities.