



Into the Blue Book Club Discussion Questions

Ocean Outbreak by Drew Harvell

November 11, 2021 8 PM EST

1. “You always remember the moment when something bad turns big,” Harvell states in the opening chapter. Can you recall an “aha” moment—a time when you became acutely aware that humans had fundamentally altered the ocean?
2. Which of the four disease outbreaks discussed in the book did you find the most interesting and useful to learn about?
3. Disease outbreaks in the ocean differ from outbreaks on land. Drew discusses the “perfect storm” of outbreak conditions: new pathogens introduced via aquaculture, salt water providing a hospitable environment for pathogens, pathogens discharged by shipping vessels, effects of pollution and climate change, and more. Were you aware of all of these conditions? Did any surprise you?
4. In the book, Drew writes “The sea fan outbreak that had started in 1994 lasted about seven years and then slowly faded. By 2004, when we were fully geared up to study the epidemic, it had run its course.” What does this mean for a future ocean where outbreaks are an increasing threat, and for our ability to keep up in a scientific and policy sense?
5. Harvell articulates the urgent need for scientists and non-scientists alike to do more to understand and protect the ocean. What happens when the general public becomes attached to an idea that doesn’t necessarily align with scientific evidence? Are there examples of this in the book, or others you can think of, and how can the conservation community respond?
6. Harvell points out that we need to improve our efforts to monitor and respond to ocean outbreaks and treat them in a way that matches how we respond to land-based pathogens. What changes or efforts do you think can be made to effectively respond to these outbreaks, either as an individual or a species?