

## **Caledonian Coast: Ecological Transformation and Conservation of Scottish Waters and Shores: Abstract**

*Caledonian Coast* examines human-wildlife interactions on the Scottish shoreline and surrounding waters, considering how these are influenced by historical, cultural, and economic factors. A primary contention of this work is that humans and nature must not be treated as two separate entities, but rather as components of an integrated ecosystem. This study therefore argues that the conservation of coastal and marine habitat is vital for the health of human communities and vice versa. The motivation to protect and restore these ecosystems is varied and incorporates a number of different interest groups, such as farmers and fishermen. While the perception of these landscapes may differ for each person, there remains a common sense of dependency on and responsibility towards the ocean and its inhabitants. This study thus addresses issues of individual and community empowerment, evaluating how local actions can respond to global threats.

Each chapter takes a different component of the ecosystem as its focus: vegetation, invertebrates, fish, birds, and marine mammals. Chapter One details the history of a type of semi-natural grassland called *machair*, which is unique to Scotland and Ireland. It is a traditional form of agriculture, called crofting, which enhances this habitat. Thus, conserving machair depends on supporting crofting communities and fostering partnerships that enable the continuation of traditional techniques. The following chapter considers the history of animals that are foundational to marine ecosystems. Looking beyond their role as food or bait, this chapter reveals the role of

invertebrates in encouraging the field of natural history and outdoor recreational pursuits. However, it also details a history of exploitation during the 19<sup>th</sup> century aquarium phase, suggesting that cultural connections with wildlife, when anthropocentric, can lead to ecological damage.

Chapter Three takes the salmon as its object of study, following the difficulties this fish faces as it swims between the open ocean and its spawning grounds. It begins with a broader analysis of the fishing industry in Scotland, which, like elsewhere, has witnessed shocking declines. The chapter then addresses pollution in estuaries and rivers, which acts as a chemical barrier to fish migration, and ends with the history of hydrological changes to Highland rivers through the construction of hydroelectric dams, the legacy of which are bittersweet. The following chapter examines the growth of protective legislation in the UK, beginning with the creation of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) whose founders and original members were primarily women. This discussion of wildlife conservation begins with the particularly Victorian elements that inspired initial concern for animals and ends with an analysis of today's protected areas for seabirds. Chapter Five continues this analysis of animal welfare concerns, evaluating the ways in which emotional attachment to animals inspires interactions with and protection of marine mammals. Once hunted for products like meat, oil, and corset bones, marine mammals are no longer treated as harvestable commodities, but rather have become the focus of a growing ecotourism industry. While risks exist, this chapter concludes that mutually beneficial human-wildlife interactions can be possible.