

# 6 Things You Need To Know About the Ocean:

## Care2 Exclusive Interview With Ocean Pioneers

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It's not called the blue planet for nothing. The ocean covers just over seventy percent of the Earth's surface. And hard as it may be to believe, [ninety-five percent of our underwater world remains unexplored](#). That's something oceanographer and [National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence Sylvia Earle](#), and her colleague and friend Ocean Producer and Executive Director of [Plant-A-Fish](#), Fabien Cousteau, want to change.

"We have not really thought about

the ocean as the cornerstone of our life support system until just about now," Earle told me at the [Social Good Summit](#) last weekend in New York. I sat down with Earle and Cousteau to talk about their passion and what we can do to make sure the earth's most precious resource stays healthy. Out of our conversation came **the top six things they want you to know about the oceans**.

1. **"There is no such thing as a healthy life without healthy**

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**oceans,”** Cousteau told me. “Healthy oceans, healthy life, healthy economy. Sick oceans, means sick people and a sick economy. In the past we didn’t know how intricate our connection was with the aquatic environment. Water connects us all. It’s the circulatory system of life. Sylvia calls it **the blue heart of the planet.** It’s very poignant. It’s what connects us all, a little bit like social media, but in much more fundamental ways. It’s the reason for all of the life we know on this planet. It connects us all in very positive ways but it also connects us all in very negative ways because what I do to the oceans, I do to you, and vice versa.”

2. **“The biggest problems with the oceans fall into 2 categories,”** Earle points out. **“What we’re putting into it:** all the garbage, all the toxins, all the industrial waste, plastics; megatons of plastics clog the oceans. And **what we’re taking out.** Of course, you think about oil, gas, minerals, but invariably issues have been about the wildlife we extract.

“We used to think that whales were infinite in their number and that we could just continue taking and taking. But it gradually became clear that you had to go further and further way to find whales to take. It was not until 1986 — 1986! — that the moratorium on killing these large, slow-growing, fellow mammals came into place.

**“Virtually every nation kills fish,** takes fish commercially to market, we’re

learning that **like whales, there are limits to how many fish we can take and get away with it.** In my lifetime I have watched the ocean getting stripped of tunas, groupers, swordfish, snappers, halibut, flounder, herring, cod. And sharks. **90% of sharks are gone.”**

3. “Here’s the thing most people don’t know or appreciate: **most life on earth is in the sea.**” Earle says. “Most of the **oxygen production** takes place by microscopic plants, organisms, photosynthesizers that generate oxygen out there in the water, and they take up carbon too. These recent ideas, these new insights are beginning to seep their way into our policies, But frankly right now, we are burdened with policies that were put in place fifty years ago, thirty years ago, even ten years ago when the idea was the ocean was the best place to throw garbage.”

4. **“The age of exploration has truly just begun,”** Earle claims. “We need to invest much more in the ocean. However, in this country we’re cutting back on ocean exploration at the same time we continue to advance putting billions into the exploration of space. We need to do that, we should, but we also need to really understand, and take care of the ocean, to enhance the network of protected areas just as national parks work on the lands, protect watersheds, and wild things.

“We need the counterpart in the ocean. And not just a tiny fraction of one percent, which is where it is right

now, not just in the United States, but around the world. And it is happening. People are beginning to take the kinds of steps needed to embrace the ocean and understand it. If we don't, it's not just the ocean that's in trouble. We're in trouble too."

5. "Most people don't realize they're at the beginning of a revolution, until the revolution is well underway," Cousteau believes. **"We're right at the beginning of a revolution** where knowledge is coming to us in various ways, including of course, technology and social media. And I believe that the young generations now really have the building blocks to create a real positive revolution: not a green revolution but **a blue revolution.**"

"Imagine the knowledge that Sylvia, my grandfather, other ocean pioneers have been able to bring to us, and all of the things that we've learned to date about the oceans. And imagine, all that knowledge that we've already learned just in the last few years about the connection between humans and oceans and how scary, and how fascinating it is. Imagine how much more we have to explore."

6. **"There is still plenty of reason for hope,"** Earle claims. "We have ten percent of the sharks, they're not all gone yet. We've taken action to embrace about fourteen percent of the land globally to protect watersheds, as national parks, areas that deliberately protect wildlife. I wish we could go back on what we

now know, fifty years or one hundred, or even one thousand.

"We are the most knowledgeable generation of people ever on the planet, and that gives us the edge. It's our time, We should make the best of it. We've just begun to know what questions to ask and what actions to take as never before. **It's the most exciting time to be alive, maybe the most important time to be alive.**"