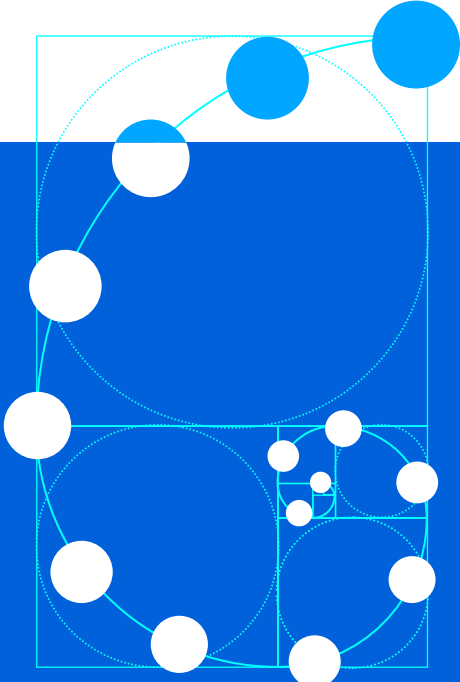


# The Positive Spiral of Ocean Bounty

The *Ocean us* logo as a mirror of its mission

LINDA NEUGEBAUER,  
CARLOS M. DUARTE,  
CHEMA HERRERA



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Ocean us Foundation

**THE OCEAN US LOGO**

The logo of OCEAN US was designed by **Chema Herrera**.  
**Diego Asencio** contributed to its final design.

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Neil Solomon

[www.solomon-language-services.com](http://www.solomon-language-services.com)

**DESIGN AND LAYOUT**

Amplitude& S.L.

[www.amplitudeand.com](http://www.amplitudeand.com)

Art Director: Diego Asencio

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# The Positive Spiral of Ocean Bounty

## The Ocean us logo as a mirror of its mission

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**Linda Neugebauer,  
Carlos M. Duarte,  
Chema Herrera**

**SUMMARY:** For far too long, our world has been caught in a downward spiral. Everything is becoming less and less. This is also true of our ocean, which is half empty of its former abundance of marine life and in a degraded state. But we humans must also reduce our appropriation of natural resources, and we are asked to reduce many things in our lives to zero. But zero has never been a desirable goal. If we want more, we need to expand the positive spiral of life upwards, starting with our oceans, which are the basis of life and the driving force that makes our planet unique.

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### **REDUCTION IS A NEGATIVE SPIRAL**

The current global crises of mass extinction and climate change are being exacerbated by the so-called politics of reduction. It uses the crisis to promote a narrative that not only makes society feel guilty, but also imposes a short-term strategy that is far removed from any consensus or the common good. Everything must be reduced to zero, net zero. If the world were a company, it would be on the verge of bankruptcy. After all, a zero-sum game and a permanent minus have never been desirable goals from a business point of view.

We seem to have lost sight of an important law of nature, which states that reduction only leads to further reduction. It is only through growth in abundance and diversity that more can be created. And it is this very diversity of life that provides the ecological stability and security that we need to get back on track.

But let's take the example of the ocean itself. In the past, fishermen saw seals as competitors for fish. This led to massive killing and, in some countries, extermination of seals. However, the complete disappearance of seals has not led to the expected increase in fish stocks. Instead, there was a sharp decline. Similarly, hunting whales in Antarctica to 10% of their historical abundance did not increase krill stock, but rather decreased it, weakening the Antarctic food web. An abundant ocean promotes abundance because it keeps the ocean in a highly productive state.

All parts of marine ecosystems are interdependent. When one species or habitat declines, the entire system is affected, creating a feedback loop. The result is a downward spiral that leads to a depleted ocean.

## THE TRIGGER OF THE NEGATIVE SPIRAL

Our blue planet is a system of natural laws that are omnipresent. They exist, and when we ignore and break them, our biosphere suffers. The consequences of this are always catastrophic. All animals, besides humans (with the exception of many indigenous groups), plants and organisms follow these natural laws and fulfill the services they provide in the ecosystem as a kind of *raison d'être*.

But what about us humans? There was the notion, even inscribed in the book of Genesis, that we humans have a dominant role in the universe and that the natural world exists only to provide for us. This belief has led us, as mammals, to simply disconnect from the web of nature, fueled by the hubris derived from the control of energy that the Industrial Revolution granted us. In doing so, we have completely overlooked the fact that our actions are also subject to the laws of nature and therefore directly influence the functioning of the biosphere as a whole. Instead, we turned nature into a “thing” that we use and control. This control and use of nature “became a mainstream way of thinking, absorbed into society and creating illusions of separation and supremacy over nature in everyday discourse, in our leisure, work and disciplines of knowledge.”<sup>1</sup> In other words “we are outside the ecology we plan for.”<sup>2</sup> But “the reality is that humanity exists embedded within nature”<sup>3</sup> and nature is a system of fixed laws that work without exception.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the solution to the climate and biodiversity crises lies in abandoning this hubris and embedding our operations within the laws of nature, as part of nature itself.

It is therefore a matter of dedicating our feelings, thoughts, and all our capacities towards the completeness of the ecosystem, of which we are a part. We must once again relate to ourselves as part of the whole and develop our human potential in the biosphere.

We must stop thinking in terms of minus and zero and start thinking in terms of positives, in a life-affirming way. Indeed, even with great ambition, aiming for a big plus. At the moment, the only thing we are focusing on is to be less bad, to reduce the reduction. But what we completely overlook is that the bottom line still remains a clear minus. And a minus means that we are still sliding along a negative spiral that moves exponentially downwards once a certain limit is reached.

## THE POSITIVE SPIRAL OF OCEAN BOUNTY

The new question we must ask ourselves is not how to limit, for example, the decline of fish, sharks, or coral reefs. Instead, we need to figure out how we can set those enabling conditions that ensure that the animals and plants of the oceans as a whole increase exponentially once again. If we can do that, we will have achieved our goal.

Ultimately, this would mean that we have been able to reverse the negative feedback loops caused by human pressure into positive ones that trigger an upcycle of growing abundance. This would mean that we have finally broken the negative spiral of loss and degradation of our oceans that has accelerated the decline of marine biodiversity and reduced the reproductive capacity of marine life and its ability to maintain a resilient environment.<sup>5</sup>

1. Miles Richardson (2023): *Reconnection: Fixing our Broken Relationship with Nature*. London: Pelagic Publishing, 21.

2. Gregory Bateson (2000): *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

3. Richardson, *Reconnection*, 30.

4. Georges-Louis Leclerc Buffon and Louis Jean Marie Daubenton, *Histoire Naturelle, générale et particulière*, 1749.

5. *The ocean upcycle* (2019), Susana Agusti and Carlos M. Duarte

To achieve the goal of rebuilding marine biodiversity and restoring the resilience of our ocean, the pressures that have led to marine degradation must be removed and replaced by a globally active rebuilding effort. Losses and greenhouse gas emissions will be reversed and reduced by restoring species and habitats through sustainable management. This, in turn, leads to positive feedback loops. The latter are supported by the remarkable reproductive capacity of marine organisms, allowing once again for greater biodiversity in the oceans.<sup>6</sup> The result is a virtuous spiral of ocean bounty in which the ocean exponentially increases in diversity and abundance over time.

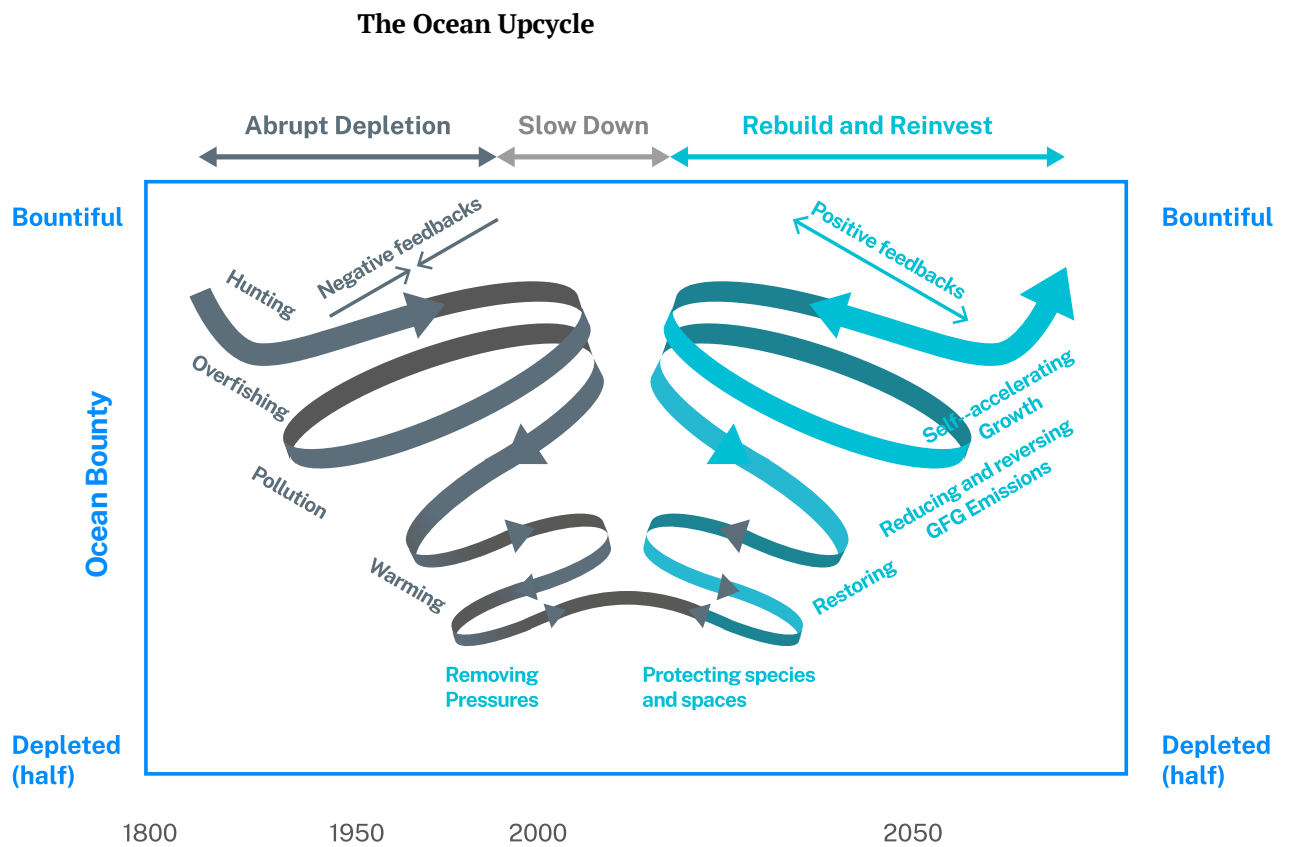


Figure: The ocean upcycle, copyright Susana Agusti and Carlos M. Duarte

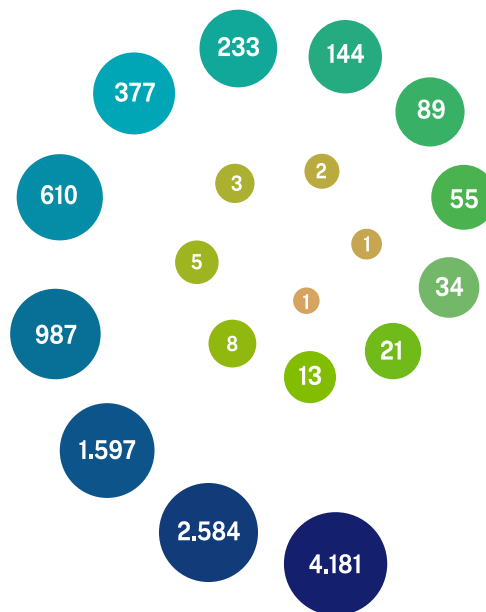
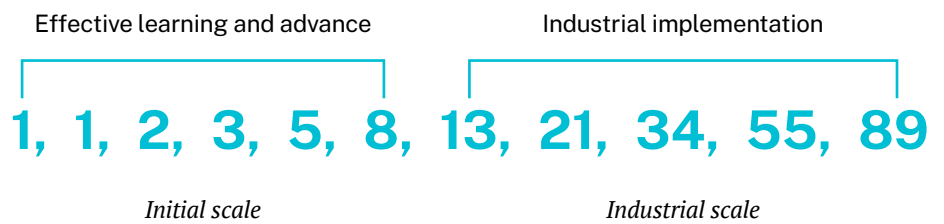
6. The ocean upcycle (2019), Susana Agusti and Carlos M. Duarte

**THE FIBONACCI SPIRAL:  
THE OCEAN US LOGO, A  
MIRROR OF ITS MISSION**

At OCEAN US, we have decided to reverse the decline and to activate the positive spiral of ocean bounty by rebuilding marine life guided by science and propelled by the power of collective action. We aim to measurably promote the exponential growth potential of marine life through specific rebuilding actions. This exponential growth will positively impact both people and the economy. Because, as already mentioned, everything on this planet is interconnected.

The OCEAN US logo is therefore an outward spiral of the Fibonacci series. Named after Leonardo Fibonacci, the series is an infinite sequence of natural numbers that describes growth across multiple domains of nature, including growth processes in the ocean. The Fibonacci sequence is not only found in all the patterns and shapes of the ocean. It is also found in the rest of nature and the universe.

**The OCEAN US Fibonacci Sequence for Rebuilding the World’s Oceans**





*Life is a spiral.  
Human progress is the upward  
spiral of growth towards more.*



Foto: Jeremy Bishop, Unsplash.com



**Oceanus**

Rebuilding marine life is still possible

**OCEAN US FOUNDATION**

HEADQUARTER: Industriestrasse 56, 9491 Ruggell / LIECHTENSTEIN  
info@oceanus.life / www.oceanus.life