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Singing the Turtles to Sea: The Comcáac (Seri) Art and Science of Reptiles

Gary Paul Nabhan

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The Comcáac, or Seri Indians, are a native people living in the starkly beautiful and biologically rich desert of Sonora, Mexico. Reptiles of all kinds—lizards, crocodiles, snakes, and turtles—play a large role in Seri culture. Unfortunately, the long-term survival of the Comcáac and the future of many of these animals are uncertain. This book, written with Gary Nabhan's characteristic combination of lyricism and scientific insight, describes and preserves the richness of Seri knowledge about reptiles. Through stories, songs, photographs, illustrations of Seri arts, and discussions of Sonoran ecology, Nabhan demonstrates the irreplaceable value of this knowledge for us today.

Singing the Turtles to Sea vividly describes the desert, its phantasmagoric landforms, and its equally fantastic animals. This book contains important new information on the origins, biogeography, and conservation status of marine and desert reptiles in this region. Nabhan also discusses the significance of reptiles in Seri folklore, natural history, language, medicine, and art.

Winner of a MacArthur "genius" grant and the Burroughs Medal for nature writing, Gary Nabhan has had a long collaboration with the Comcáac and is uniquely placed to bring together the many voices that tell this story. The text is interspersed with his own lively adventures getting to know these indigenous people and with the insights of many individuals in their community.

This book is a magnificent ethnobiology that also succeeds in linking the importance of preserving ecological diversity with issues such as endangered languages and human rights. *Singing the Turtles to Sea* ultimately points the way toward a more hopeful future for the native cultures and animals of the Sonoran desert and for the preservation of indigenous cultures and species around the world.

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