

*A Toast to the First Census of Marine Life*  
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First...

A salute to Fred Grassle, with vision ambitious,  
A dream, an idea, to census the fishes!  
Another, with courage- remember him well.  
The one, the only - Jesse Ausubel.

But fishes alone were not enough.  
The sea, after all, is alive with stuff.  
What about urchins, sea stars and snails?  
What of the microbes, the kelp, the whales?

It sounds, at first, slightly outrageous.  
But the idea caught on - it was contagious!  
Special thanks to the foundation, Alfred P. Sloan  
Their mandate was clear: explore the unknown.

Others joined in and momentum grew  
For a decade devoted to life in the blue.  
The twenty-first century began with a splash,  
Two thousands explorers with just enough cash

To embark on a project, to answer big questions...  
From 82 countries came help - and suggestions:  
Who lives in the sea? Who lived long ago?  
The future! The future! How can we know?

With ships, with subs, with satellites beaming,  
In labs and libraries, with coffee mugs steaming,  
Discoveries poured in, one after another,  
Thousands of creatures known just to their mother-

-Before and until the Census revealed  
The who, what and where the sea had concealed.  
Thrilling new insights, not known previously,

Life in the Blue, neglected, grievously...

In a bucket of water, the gulp of a whale  
Diversity thrives on a different scale  
More phyla of creatures, a far deeper history  
Than all of the land, our bias – a mystery.

A mystery, too, that there is an impression  
That fish can be taken, what's the expression?  
As "harvested" goods, as if from a farm  
In numbers so large there is cause for alarm.

Ninety per cent gone are some tasty creatures  
Taken before knowing more valuable features.  
The losses are large, the Census confirms this.  
With continuing trends, our children may miss

The presence of turtles, of tuna, and shark  
Of oceans depleted, their future...stark.  
But knowing yields caring and caring yields hope...  
That our species will see and somehow will cope.

We have power, and plenty of reasons  
To continue the Census for many more seasons.  
Much has been learned, and ten years a lot.  
But the end of the mission? It's definitely not.

How much of the ocean has so far been seen?  
Five per cent? Less? See what I mean?  
With the state of the ocean now in decline,  
Our, future, too, is on the line...

To the past, to the future, to all who chimed in.  
A new Census of Marine Life is about to begin.  
Now is the time, as never before  
To explore and explore – and explore...some more.

With your glasses...

Onward – and downward!