



Sea Changes

Stories of climate, life and the shifting nature of coastal waters

Those who idealize the past assume that, were it not for human frailty and failure, we would live in an Earthly paradise, in balance and in harmony with nature. And indeed, many native peoples have come close. But not all have — and perhaps not most. Archaeological investigations reveal that our forebears routinely abused nature's abundance, moving on once resources were exhausted and the landscape despoiled. That was only possible when population densities were low, when nature left unabused could regenerate over time. There is no such luxury today. ■ Many are working to understand humankind's impact on the planet. Better understanding means better information that citizens and policymakers can use to promote present-day environmental healing and to prevent additional excesses. The stories that follow feature four Old Dominion researchers, whose attempts to fathom basic processes at work in coastal waters are part of larger efforts to chart environmental changes under way around the globe. Without such knowledge, humanity would risk its very survival in the planetary biosphere of tomorrow.