

In search of Vanishing Fish: new book looks at how to fix global fisheries

BY JOHN ACKERMANN

Posted Jul 7, 2019 11:18 am PDT Last Updated Jul 7, 2019 at 3:40 pm PDT



FILE - An Atlantic salmon is seen during a Department of Fisheries and Oceans fish health audit at the Okisollo fish farm near Campbell River, B.C. Wednesday, Oct. 31, 2018. THE CANADIAN PRESS /Jonathan Hayward

SUMMARY

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Pauly likens the global fishing industry to a Ponzi scheme

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VANCOUVER (NEWS 1130) – We may not give much thought to how a piece of fish gets to our plate, but the author of a new book suggests we should start. Daniel Pauly is a UBC marine biologist and the man behind *Vanishing Fish: Shifting Baselines and The Future of Global Fisheries*.

One of his goals with this book of essays is to dispel some of the myths around fishing. “One of these is the myth of sustainability, that we are staying at a place and fishing steadily a certain stock. That really doesn’t happen

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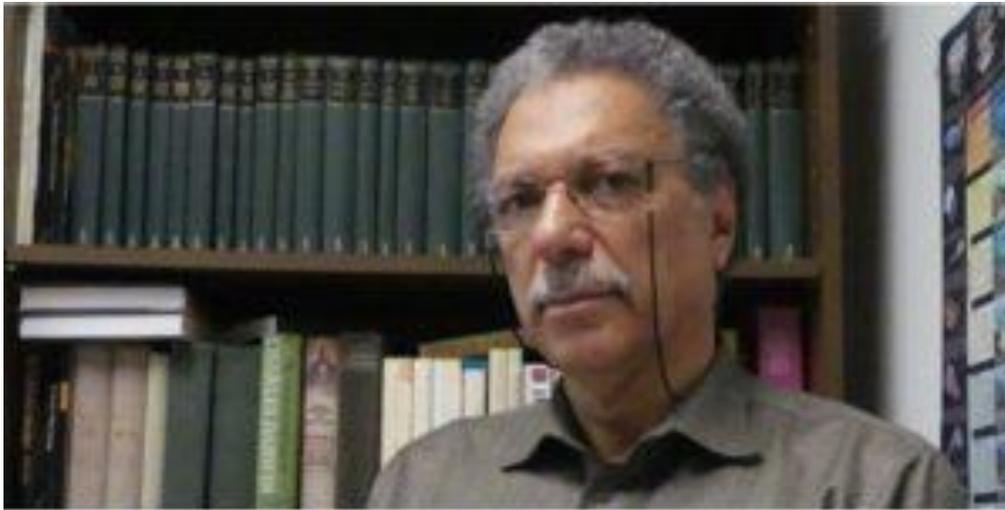
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much,” he explains. “What happens is that we move from one stock to the other.”

He says this a form of duplicity by the global fishing industry, which he calls a vast Ponzi scheme. “Because, essentially, the high catch is not generated by continuous catches from the original place where you fish, but from new catches [and] new areas where you have just moved in. And so, the profits of the fisheries and the return from the fishery are contingent on finding new areas, just like a Ponzi scheme is contingent on finding new people that you can fool.”



Another form of duplicity he identifies is the changing taxonomy of the fish trade, “because we are fishing different animals than we were 50 years ago.” For instance, what was once known as Patagonian toothfish is now legally sold as Chilean sea bass.

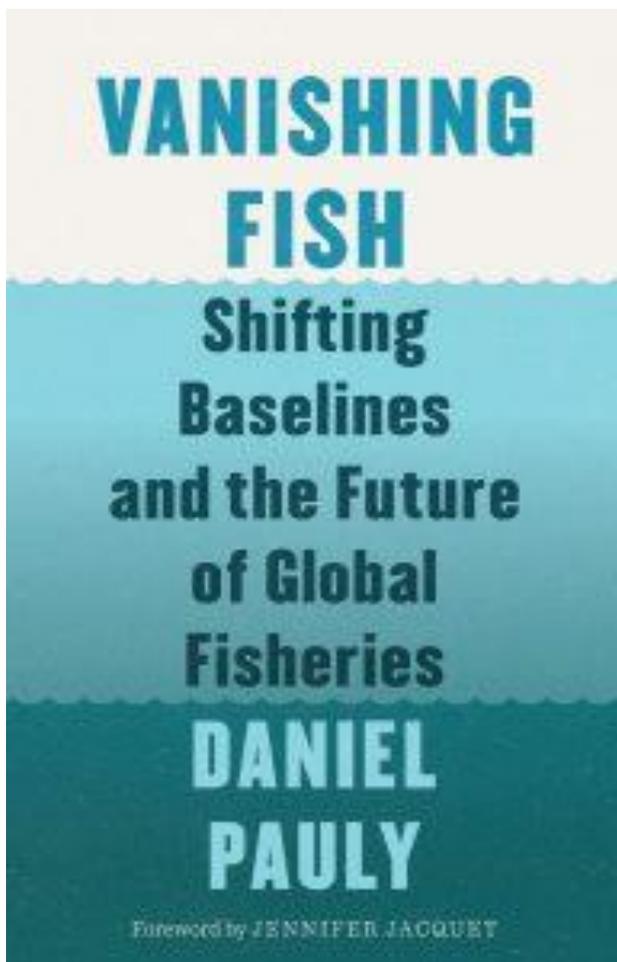
Admittedly, Pauly is also particularly good at turning a phrase, describing the act of eating a tuna roll as being no more benign than driving a Hummer. “Well, in order for a ton of tuna to exist, the tuna will have eaten ten tons of sardine-like fish, because they eat smaller fish, and this is because the food web is much longer in the sea,” Pauly says.

He argues we should be more thoughtful about what we eat. Pauly suggests choosing fish lower in the food chain, as they are more plentiful. “Such as

sardine, anchovies, and so on. Right now, much of the sardine and anchovies in the world are ground up to make fish meal which is used for pigs and chicken and salmon, which is a horrible waste.”

And as for a way forward, he says we should begin by stopping subsidies to global fisheries. “This subsidizing of [fisheries] is crazy because it cannot be economically effective, it’s a waste of money, and, actually, it encourages overfishing and endangers species that otherwise would not be endangered.”

Vanishing Fish: Shifting Baselines and The Future of Global Fisheries is available from [Greystone Books](#).



Link: <https://www.citynews1130.com/2019/07/07/vanishing-fish-book/>