



Vertical Reefs: Life on Oil and Gas Platforms in the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf Coast Books, sponsored by Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi)

Mary Katherine Wicksten

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On a clear night, the bright lights of oil platforms sparkle in the Gulf of Mexico. Thousands of these platforms off the coasts of Texas and Louisiana play an important role in the lives of underwater species who find food, shelter, and permanent homes in the ecosystem created by these big, three-dimensional structures standing on the flat sea floor. They may also play lesser-known roles “above the waves” in the migration of birds and even insects.

Tapping into years of diving experience, marine biologist Mary Wicksten looks at the inhabitants and visitors of these “vertical reefs”, explaining how life arrives on the platforms, what species settle and stay (like barnacles), and which ones visit then disappear (like silky sharks). She looks at how different life forms take up occupancy from the surface downward, and she shows how these communities vary on nearshore and deepwater platforms.

While most people may never experience the undersea world of oil platforms, this book will bring a better understanding of it to any teacher, beachgoer, angler, diver, or coastal resident who ever wondered what was going on beneath those far-off lights.

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