



Working the Chesapeake: Waterman on the Bay

Mark Jacoby

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To learn firsthand, from their own mouths and aboard their own boats, more about the lives of Chesapeake watermen, Mark Jacoby went out with them in all seasons and in all weathers. He followed Wadey Murphy in his pursuit of crabs, Ben Waters in his hunt for oysters. He joined fishermen as they tended their pound nets, their fyke nets, their eel pots. Jacoby followed a year's seasons of working the water, devoting a chapter thirteen in all to the major types of fisheries in the Bay. The book begins with pound netting finfish in early May and finishes with diving for oysters in late March. Though his initial purpose was to detail commercial fishing methods in the Chesapeake, he ultimately shows us much more: the look of the water at dawn in a rising northeast wind, the sound of a waterman's voice cast in accents from our Colonial past as he speaks about his life, his problems, his prospects for the future. In short, *Working the Chesapeake* gives us the people and places that define the region's special character, not only the watermen's techniques but, in brief glimpses, their view of what may be a disappearing world. Whatever the future holds for Bay watermen, *Working the Chesapeake* has captured a moment in their history. Through carefully rendered interviews and astute observations Mark Jacoby has preserved for us a slice of life, a slice of time. His descriptions are embellished by the drawings of Neil Harpe, a well-known Chesapeake Bay artist who has a special interest in workboats and watermen.

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