

PROSPECTUS

In celebration of the 80th anniversary of the historic voyage of the *Western Flyer*,  
The Arion Press announces a fine press edition of

# *Sea of Cortez*

A Leisurely Journal of Travel and Research

by

JOHN STEINBECK *and* EDWARD F. RICKETTS

with wood engravings of five marine specimens

and of the famed *Western Flyer* by

Richard Wagener

including a note on the publishing history

and a map of the 1940 voyage

Issued in Standard, Variant, and Deluxe editions

at San Francisco in October 2020

In honor of the authors' landmark 1940 voyage, Arion Press brings new life to a monumental collaboration—part detailed scientific study, part philosophical and spiritual exploration. When Steinbeck and Ricketts set off to investigate the narrow gulf between Baja, California and mainland Mexico, they were inspired by the enormity of their task. Now referred to as the Gulf of California, this body of water encompasses over nine hundred islands and remains one of the most biologically abundant and biodiverse ecosystems in the world. Written with lush description and wry humor, *Sea of Cortez* is at once a journal of an intimate friendship and an ecological rallying cry.

First published by Viking Press on December 5, 1941, two days before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the book remains an overlooked masterpiece. One reviewer—Joel Hedgpeth, a marine biologist and acolyte of Ricketts—recognizing its importance, deemed the book “the first large-scale attempt to include both phases of . . . human activity in one volume.” Here Hedgpeth is referring to both Steinbeck’s and Ricketts’ account of the scientific expedition and also its systematic results. These results were attained through intensive field work and careful collation, leading to the discovery of some fifty new species, the first extensive survey of Panamic fauna and a source book for future students of Gulf ecology. But no second printing or paperback edition followed.

Ten years later, an entirely new incarnation of the book appeared as a trade edition, also a Viking Press hardcover, titled *The Log from the Sea of Cortez*. This trimmer edition printed just the narrative portion of the journey along with a new preface by Steinbeck, “About Ed Ricketts.” (Ricketts was killed in May, 1948, after the Del Monte Express passenger train collided with his car.) This touchingly fictionalized biographical portrait of Ricketts, written more as a self-exorcism than a tribute (“Maybe if I write down everything I can remember about him, that will lay the ghost”), was presumably written to temper Steinbeck’s brazen decision to remove Ricketts’ name from the cover, thus making Steinbeck sole author.

Why Steinbeck and his publisher elected to remove Ricketts from both the title page and work’s copyright is unknown. But it is something of a travesty given the balance of authorship both men acknowledged. Ricketts wrote to a friend in November of 1941:

However much it seems otherwise “Sea of Cortez” is truly a compilation. Jon worked at the collecting and sorting of animals, and looked over some of the literature, including the specialist literature, and I had a hand even in the narrative, altho the planning of the scientific section is entirely mine. But much of the detail of the narrative is based on a journal I kept during the trip, and some of the text derives from it and from unpublished essays of mine. . . . The book isn’t so much a question of first half by Steinbeck, second half by Ricketts, as it is a true compilation in every sense of the word.

The Arion Press edition rectifies this wrong, restoring Ricketts’ co-authorship to a hybrid of *Sea* and *Log*. Further, in creating this unique edition, Arion incorporates into its design, reclaimed wood from the *Western Flyer*, the vessel on which

the two men traveled. The boat is currently being restored in Port Townsend, Washington. In 2021, the revived vessel is scheduled to set out along the western coast of the United States and Mexico, making periodic stops at ports and local maritime historical centers to share the authors’ passion for the celebration and preservation of life in all its forms.

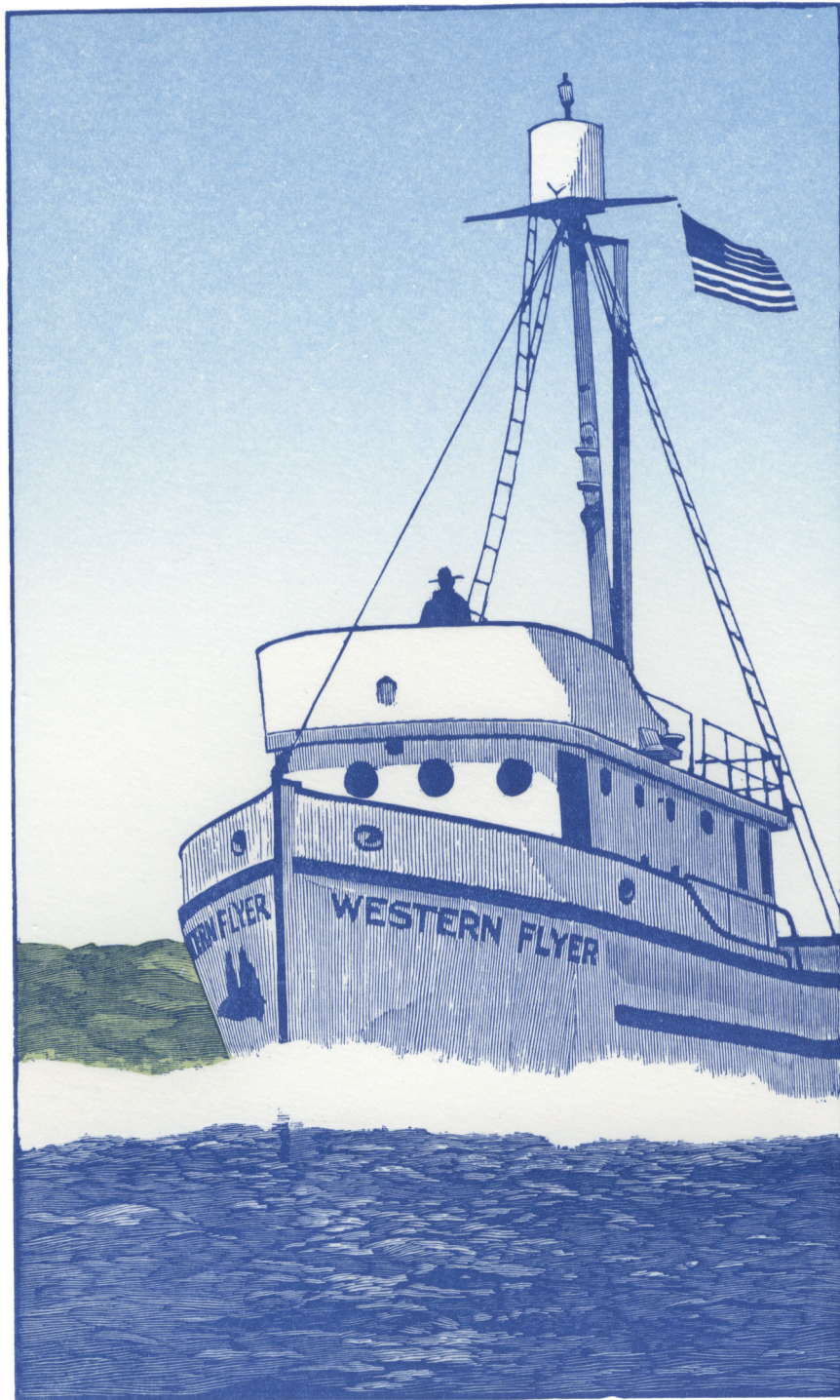
#### ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The *Arion Sea of Cortez* is illustrated by renowned wood engraver **Richard Wagener** who has been creating intricately detailed renderings of biological and geographical phenomena for more than thirty years. For the book, Wagener has made six engravings, mostly on 7½ by 4½ inch blocks: an iconic image of the *Western Flyer* in three colors; four marine specimens with color tint underlays; and the final, slightly smaller image in black only, a rendition of the Spiny Lobster (*Panulirus interruptus*). Balancing realism with abstraction, Wagener’s woodblocks conjure a remarkable atmospheric resonance that amplifies Steinbeck’s observations. He lives and works in northern California.

**Martin Machado** is a San Francisco Bay Area artist known for his depictions of maritime labor, exploration, and colonialism. His map “The Voyage of the Western Flyer” appears on front and rear endsheets. Drawing inspiration from 19th century mapmaking tropes, it depicts the *Golfo de California*, Sonoran coast, and the multiple *Western Flyer* collecting stations. His work has been shown internationally and has been featured in the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *New York Times Magazine*. Machado’s original artwork can be viewed on the Arion website and is offered for sale separately. It is ink and gouache on Arches cold pressed paper, 29 x 37 inches. Please enquire.

#### THE EDITION

The edition is limited to 250 copies for sale, signed by Richard Wagener. The book is large quarto, 12¼ by 9 inches, 240 pages plus 12 unnumbered pages for the woodblocks. It is printed by letterpress on 120 gsm Zerkall smooth white Frankfurt “wavy laid” mouldmade. The text is 14-point Monotype Perpetua cast on site expressly for the project, with 11-point Perpetua for footnotes and ancillary material. Larger sizes and cuts of Perpetua from the press’ historic collection of metal types are used amply throughout and handset for display. Wagener’s Boxwood and Maple engravings are printed on heavier, 170 gsm Zerkall smooth stock, hinged with handmade tissue and tipped into the sewing sections by hand.



*The Western Flyer*  
(Image displayed at actual size)

#### BINDING OPTIONS

The **Limited edition** is bound in striated pearlescent cloth with deep red coral paper sides imprinted with a starfish motif derived from Wagener. It features a recessed label with titling imprinted on wood veneer reclaimed from the *Western Flyer*. It is square-backed, machine sewn, and presented in a slipcase with aqua-colored paper sides, charcoal cloth edges, and imprinted paper spine label. 185 copies are available for sale. \$1,540 with Subscription. (\$2,200 retail.)

The **Variation edition** of 25 copies is sewn by hand with linen thread over linen tapes and has 3-color handsewn silk headbands. It is bound in quarter coral leather with striated pearlescent cloth sides and gold titling stamped on the rounded spine. The salvaged wood veneer labels are larger than for the Limited edition and feature additional artwork—a landscape of the Sonoran coast drawn by Martin Machado. The Variation bindings are presented in matching full-cloth slipcases with foil-stamped leather spine labels. \$2,560 with Subscription. (\$3,200 retail.)

The **Deluxe edition** consists of 40 copies bound in the Variation style. These copies are presented in boxes designed and crafted in San Francisco by artisanal woodworker Jonathan Anzalone of Monterey Cypress, appropriately, and also of old-growth Douglas Fir planks salvaged from the famed purse-seiner. The finished boxes feature continuous-grain Cypress side panels—akin to a 360° seascape panorama—and lids that incorporate a salvaged *Western Flyer* plank with its distinctive iron hobnail holes. The unique design includes a “porthole” rimmed in brass that has been cut into the upper, Cypress portion of the lid allowing the book’s underlying Cypress label to show through. Nested below the book, accessible by a leather pull tab, is a coverboard chemise bottom that houses an extra, stand-alone signed print of Wagener’s iconic *Western Flyer* three-color wood engraving printed on heavyweight Zerkall 250 gsm Litho. These prints measure 12¼ by 9 inches and are suitable for framing. \$3,360 with Subscription. (\$4,200 retail.)

#### THE WESTERN FLYER PRINT

A limited number of additional signed *Western Flyer* prints on heavyweight Zerkall 250 gsm Litho will be available separately for purchase at \$400 apiece.

#### THE ARION PRESS

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