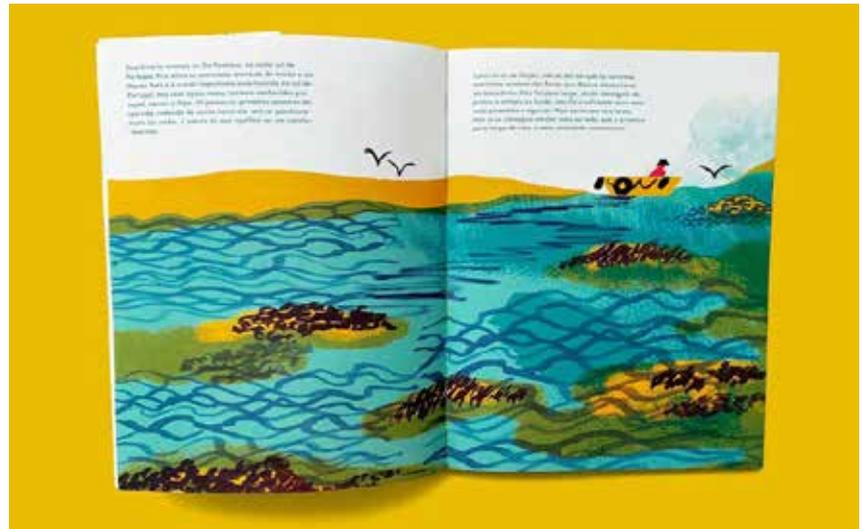




Small and Precious. The Seahorse.

Joana Bértholo and Mariana Malhão



Information

Original title: *Pequeno e Precioso. O Cavalo-marinho*
Authors: Joana Bértholo (text) and Mariana Malhão (illustration)
Format: 21×27cm
Pages: 48
Price: 10€
Published: 2021
ISBN: 978-972-27290-9-3

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What strange creature is this? Strange? No! This is a fantastic creature that has seemingly magical powers. It can change colour, for example, so as to be taken for seaweed or coral. And it's not the females of the species that get pregnant — the male is the one that does that. Have you guessed what it is yet? Some more clues: it's got a tail, but it doesn't shake it; it's a fish, but it doesn't have scales. It is the... yes, the seahorse. And Joana Bértholo and Mariana Malhão tell you all about it in the book *Small and Precious. The Seahorse*, published by Imprensa Nacional, with design and art direction by Pato Lógico. It is a joint publication and part of the «Threatened Species» collection.

In the words of the authors

“It was a pleasure being part of a collection of books about threatened species, and writing about such a peculiar creature. Besides having enjoyed writing this

book, I also learned a great deal. I had no idea that some of them could grow up to 30 centimeters in length. I liked to find out from the fact that the eastern Algarve plays such an important role in the preservation of seahorse species — my maternal family is from the Algarve. Ria Formosa is a priceless pearl, another treasure that the south of the country holds. Its preservation is fundamental.”
Joana Bértholo

“I feel that to illustrate a book about seahorses is unfair. They've been so well-designed by nature that the competition has already been won. But illustrating a book like this is very important if we want to avoid a situation in which one day we find that these animals are a mythological species that only exists in photographs in books and on the internet. They seem far too extraordinary to exist, and that's why we have to preserve them.”
Mariana Malhão



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#biodiversity #ocean #sea #nature
#marineconservation #threatenedspecies
#environmentaleducation



Joana Bértholo

Born in Lisbon, in 1982. She has a degree in Communication Design (Faculty of Fine Arts in Lisbon) and a doctorate in Cultural Studies (European University Viadrina, Germany). Alongside her literary work, she also writes for dance and for theater. In 2009, her first novel *Diálogos Para o Fim do Mundo* was awarded the Maria Amália Vaz de Carvalho prize. Since then she has published other novels, short stories and a children's books. *O Museu do Pensamento* was elected Best Children's Book by the SPA in 2018, and was awarded the Literary Festival of Fátima prize in the same category. *Ecologia* was a finalist in other prestigious prizes. In 2020, Joana was chosen to represent Portuguese literature in the European Literature Night. In theater, she has written various dramatic pieces and she has supported dramaturgy in other guises.

Mariana Malhão

Born in Coimbra, in 1994. Illustrator. She had always done a bit of drawing, but one day her brother gave her a graphic diary and that got her thinking that she might be able to take it more seriously. As soon as she could, she went to study Communication Design in the Faculty of Fine Arts in Porto. When she finished that course she did an internship at Oficina Arara, and that opened the world of independent publishing to her, as well as all the possibilities that came with it. She is the co-organiser of the Saturday Market in Maus Hábitos and co-founder of the Senhora Presidenta gallery, in Porto. Nowadays she divides her time between illustration, in its various forms, and managing the gallery.

Other titles

I am the Iberian Lynx. The Most Threatened Feline in the World; Queen of the Sky. The Iberian Imperial Eagle; I am Wolf. The King of the Portuguese Forest; Prince of the Seas. The Common Dolphin.





English translation excerpts

Hello! I'm Hipo

Hipo is short for Hippocampus which is the scientific name for the seahorse. The word hippocampus comes from Ancient Greek, as do many of the words that we use. For the Greeks, Hippo meant "horse" and Kampos meant "sea monster". The Hippocampus were very special mythological beings, which mermaids, or sea nymphs (called Nereids), would sometimes use as horses, but that was only in their free time when they weren't busy leading the carriage of the great Poseidon, god of the sea, whom the Romans called Neptune.

An Animal with a Class and a Sub-Class

Seahorses belong to the Osteichthyes class and to the Actinopterygii subclass, and they are members of the Syngnathidae family- all complicated words which also come from the Ancient Greek. The Syngnathidae family members are easy to recognise because they have a very long body and a protruding mouth,

which means that their mouth sticks out a lot. The pipe fish and the dragon fish also belong to this family.

[...]

This story begins in Ria Formosa, on the southern coast of Portugal. Ria Formosa sits between the sandy peninsulas of Ancão and Manta Rota, and it is the most important wet zone in the south of Portugal. Hipo was born in its shallow waters, which are also known for their marshes. It was there that he spent the first weeks of his life, surrounded by others just like him, without bothering himself too much (if at all) about what it meant to be a seahorse.

Everything was going well, until one day the sea currents were so strong that Hipo was carried a little way off. Not very far - he could still see his cousins and his friends in the distance - but far enough for a fishing net to grab him. Hipo wriggled and twisted, but that only meant that he tangled himself up even more in the net, and the net dragged him

far, far away from his home at a head spinning speed!

In this place, no one had ever seen a seahorse. They looked at him, intrigued. What a unique and special being!, they thought, a little too afraid to answer him.

Ahhhhhhh! Hipo couldn't cope with so many difficult questions. He hadn't managed to convince the other fish that he was also a fish. He curled up in some seaweed and asked them to leave him in peace. There he stayed all alone with an uncomfortable feeling in his chest. He was suffering from a really annoying thing called an "identity crisis". An identity crisis is something that happens when we don't know very well who we are, or where we belong, or when the people around us, or rather, in his case, the animals, make us wonder about that. Was he really a fish? That was a question he'd never asked himself!

[...]