



Trawler: A Journey Through the North Atlantic

Redmond O'Hanlon

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Trawler: A Journey Through the North Atlantic

Redmond O'Hanlon

Trawler: A Journey Through the North Atlantic Redmond O'Hanlon

Having survived Borneo, Amazonia, and the Congo, the indefatigable Redmond O'Hanlon sets off on his next adventure: his own perfect storm, in the wild waters off the northern tip of Scotland. Equipped with a fancy Nikon, an excessive supply of socks, and no seamanship whatsoever, O'Hanlon joins the commercial fishing crew of the *Norlantean*, a deep-sea trawler, to stock a bottomless hull with their catch, even as a hurricane roars around them. Rich in oceanography, marine biology, and uproarious humor, *Trawler* is Redmond O'Hanlon at his finest.

Trawler: A Journey Through the North Atlantic Details

Date : Published January 3rd 2006 by Vintage (first published 2003)

ISBN : 9781400078103

Author : Redmond O'Hanlon

Format : Paperback 368 pages

Genre : Travel, Nonfiction, Adventure, Science

 [Download Trawler: A Journey Through the North Atlantic ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Trawler: A Journey Through the North Atlantic ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Trawler: A Journey Through the North Atlantic Redmond O'Hanlon

From Reader Review Trawler: A Journey Through the North Atlantic for online ebook

Iris says

"Redsy" is very easy to read: his descriptions of close encounters with gelatinous deep-sea creatures punctuate long monologues about seasickness and dialogues with hardy young men o' the sea. "Trawler" is almost all reconstructed dialogue of the crewmen, whose Scottish brogue and bullshitting are endearing but, for me, a bit wearying.

We science-mad, natural-history enthusiasts must supplement this book with something of more substance. Only intermittently does Redsy discuss the aquatic life forms that end up in the trawler's nets, with their poison and electric currents and air-balloon mouth pods.

The best: Sylvia Earle's "Ocean - An Illustrated Atlas" which encompasses all the waters of the world, and also sums up her amazing career, exploring waters high and low to learn about life on earth.

A brief look at Sylvia Earle and her career: this New York Times article.

For visual learners: "The Deep," Claire Nouvian's innovatively designed book of haunting photographs of sea creatures.

Ocean: An Illustrated Atlas National Geographic Atlas
The Deep: The Extraordinary Creatures of the Abyss

Michael Greco says

This is the latest O'Hanlon book, I think. I've read quite a bit of him, but nothing comes close to his journey into Borneo (that actually inspired me to write my first novel). If you're into fish, than this might be for you, as that's what they're doing--in the middle of a Force 12 hurricane. The dialog sequences are astounding; O'Hanlon can write multiple pages on one conversation. I hate to say it, but it got tedious. I suppose there's only so much you can do on a trawler that doesn't slide into fiction.

Alison Hardtmann says

Redmond O'Hanlon is used to hiking through rain forests in the Congo, Borneo or Brazil, but when personal circumstances require him to stay closer to home, he comes up with the idea of writing about the wild places in Britain. Most people would decide that meant hiking in the Pennines or walking the length of the Ridgeway, but to O'Hanlon wild entailed traveling through the North Atlantic. On a deep sea fishing trawler. In January. While a hurricane raged.

Trawlermen are well paid, not just because of the very real dangers they face, but because a fishing trip lasts two or three weeks in which each man will sleep only a handful of hours, while performing dangerous and arduous tasks in very cold weather. O'Hanlon, in his fifties, didn't keep up with the younger men, but he did

stretch himself to his limit, gutting fish and packing them in ice alongside the others. He was there to help a graduate student in marine biology working on his dissertation, which made for the most interesting parts of the book. Luke had an exhaustive knowledge of the geography and zoology of the North Atlantic, and his monologues and explanations made for riveting reading. Also compelling were the personal lives of the trawlermen, whose working hours and conditions made it difficult for them to maintain relationships.

The weakness of the book, where it bogged down for me, were when O'Hanlon was monologuing. Extreme exhaustion causes all the men to talk without filters and while the others might go on and on about how working affected their marriages, the wonders of the Wyville Thomson Ridge or the defense mechanisms of the hagfish, this was welcome in a book about the North Atlantic. But O'Hanlon's areas of expertise; native customs of the Congo or famous naturalists he has known, are out of place and took me out of what was going on on the *Norlantean*. On the other hand, O'Hanlon did a beautiful job of describing what utter exhaustion felt like as well as the fear and violence of a force 12 hurricane.

Dave says

Oh my gosh!

This book is either one of the best written books in the world or it is absolute crap.

To give the author the benefit of the doubt, when I read books by the "greats", such as Charles Dickens or William Shakespeare, I get the same feeling that I got when reading Trawler. That is, what a lot of words talking such absolute crap in such a round-about boring way. So call me a philistine and call Redmond O'Hanlon a truly great writer.

But if you want to read a book that is gripping, easy to read and makes you think then stay well away from this book. You'd do better to watch afternoon TV.

Troy Parfitt says

About a decade ago, I read Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods*, a type of book I suppose I had never imagined existed: it was clever, funny, well-written, and loosely categorized as travel literature, a genre I had never heard of. I read other Bryson travel narratives and a few of his interviews. When asked, during one discussion, which writers he admired, the Des Moines, Iowa-born writer replied Jonathan Raban, Paul Theroux, and Redmond O'Hanlon. The interviewer told the interviewee his writing reminded him of O'Hanlon's and Bryson answered with something like, "Aw shucks."

I went on to read one book by Jonathan Raban and several by Paul Theroux (the godfather of travel literature, surely), but didn't get around to Redmond O'Hanlon until recently. I suppose I should have begun with one of his more famous books, like *Into the Heart of Borneo*, *In Trouble Again*, or *Congo Journey*, but I found Trawler staring at me from a bookstore shelf one day not long after I had thought a good idea for a story would be to go out on a lobster boat in Eastern Canada and write about it. O'Hanlon has saved me the trouble.

I've never read anything like Trawler before. It is highly unique, and for that reason alone it deserves praise. Redmond O'Hanlon, an Oxford-educated academic, joins a Scottish fishing trawler from Aberdeen as it sails into the North Atlantic to go about its business. Yes, there are predictably humorous bits about the author getting seasick and banging his head on things and not being able to get his sea-legs, but this is not an

account of a stodgy, over-educated Englishman and his laugh-a-minute travails aboard a working vessel staffed by a no-nonsense, unforgiving Scottish crew. It is more like a running dialogue; like one long, 340-page conversation with a somewhat no-nonsense, occasionally forgiving, extremely brave, superstitious, rather desperate, astonishingly knowledgeable, and slightly mad Scottish crew - members of which are both gracious and hostile, sometimes within the span of seconds.

O'Hanlon provides very little commentary, something I've never seen a travel writer do. Instead, he focuses on relaying what happens and what's said, and if that sounds boring, it isn't, because the experiences and discussions are so authentic and so convincing you feel like you're onboard. When O'Hanlon is gutting fish with his tattered gloves in the fish room, listening to Luke explain how a hagfish evolved and what its defensive mechanism is, with tangents about love, life, hope, and fear, the narrative is oddly moving, mysteriously compelling. To say O'Hanlon has an ear for dialogue doesn't quite capture his talent. Perhaps the author has a photographic memory (my first guess), or maybe there were whole days where he mainly took notes and didn't mention this in his book, or he might have been recording the conversations, or I suppose he could have made much of it up - only the conversations are extraordinary, banal, weird, normal, angry, friendly, asinine, and brilliant. Many are not the type of conversations one would make up. O'Hanlon sometimes says incredibly daft things or rambles (because he's out of his element, because he's sleep deprived, because he's a bookish nerd), which he immediately regrets, yet he records his statements and the responses anyway. Again, it's all so real, and that's what makes it all so strangely riveting. What of interest happens on a Scottish fishing boat? Well, just about everything if presented correctly. There's no gloss, no sheen, no special effects - Trawler is like highly literary investigative journalism, with wonderful vernacular and lots of explanations about natural science and ocean life.

Because the account is exceedingly realistic, there are lots of disturbing bits (trawlermen tend to verbally abuse each other when they haven't had any sleep in four days; and they tend to be unforgiving toward know-nothing landlubbers), but there are also plenty of deeply funny parts, and in addition to being unpredictable (how would you know when one of the crew is going to say something off-the-charts bizarre?) the humour is situational and fantastically awkward. British, in other words.

One part that really got me, that completely had me in stitches, had to do with O'Hanlon's wanting to see a Force 12 hurricane. Apparently, he sort of requested or expressed a wish to see a fierce storm, asking to be woken up if he should be asleep when one occurred. One day he is woken up and sent to the bridge. Presumably, he thinks the skipper, Jason, is going to provide an overview of how a vessel like the Norlantean operates in a tempest. On deck, O'Hanlon is buckled into the First Mate's chair. Jason greets him:

"Good evening, Redmond. Welcome to my bridge."

"Jason," I said, "yeah, good evening. But is this it? Is this a Force 12?"

"Aye," he said, not looking at me. "Maybe. Maybe not. Who cares? Only you! But I'll tell you this, Redmond. In my opinion, and please, feel free to disagree, I'd say it's a stormy, stormy night."

"Jesus Jason," I said, turning on him, for some reason, with real aggression (and holding tight with both hands to the arms of the chair, despite my chest-harness), "don't you sleep? How can you do this?"

(Jason explains that he sleeps at home and that here he's the ever-alert captain, responsible for everything, before lecturing Redmond on what was wrong with his generation and how it glorified and ruined dope.)

"When you were young, your kicks, real kicks, what were they? Jesus, you sad old fucks, you lot who

thought you were going to change the world (save us!) - you beatniks, hippies, flower-power jerk-offs, gentle layabouts, whatever you called yourselves, what did you really do? Books, fine, I'll give you that. You loved books, and that was great. And you loved your music. But give me a break, look, so what? The fucking sparrows love their music. So you gave up and lay around and smoked dope or cannabis or hashish or gear or grass or hemp in spliffs or joints or whatever you chose to call it - all those words! Worse than winos! And that's right, shit, I remember, that's the word, you smoked shit, in a mental world of hippie shite, real shite, and in the least aggressive possible way you fucked up your own lives, and you took away the motivation for your children. And free love! Spare us! So it was all cool, man, to leave a chick and hang out with another. Except, fuck you, one of those chicks happened to be my mother. Yes, my mother! And to me, not to you, a mother is a serious business. And if you leave her, you ought to be shot!"

"Jason, hang on, what are you talking about? I thought you'd been here for ever. I thought your great-to-the-nth grandfather swam ashore from the Armada..."

"You know what I think? I think there's nothing bad in itself about dope. Not in itself. Of course it does less harm than alcohol. Of course it should be legal. It's piss-nonsense. But you people, you, my dad, the old UK hippies - you invested that shite with wisdom. Just because it made you feel good. A herbal ga-ga tranquilizer. It's a plant, for Chrissake! Harmless. A couple of dreamy relax-me pills. No more, no less. And you made a fucking religion out of it!"

"Jason, hold on. Please - tell me about your dad, tell me about your mother."

"My mother? She's a Costello. Spanish. She was a great beauty in her time. Still is. And one of her very first boyfriends was John Lennon."

"Christ."

And on and on it goes - one conversation blends into another and into another.... It takes a bit of getting used to, but I would say by page 30, you ought to be hooked. Trawler is more than a simulated jaunt on a fishing boat, more than a documentary in print. It's a commentary on the wonders, dangers, and absurdities of life.

Troy Parfitt is the author of *Why China Will Never Rule the World*

Eric_W says

Being the Walter Mitty that I am, I thought it would always be fun to sail through a Force 12 storm (but only on an aircraft carrier or battleship or maybe the QM 2 being also a major chicken). Well, O'Hanlon had the same wish only he wanted to experience it on a fishing trawler in the North Sea. He was invited on the *Norlantean* by a fishing biologist friend. Jason, the captain, is very good at what he does -- he has to be since he took out a 2,000,000 pound loan to refit the ship. Talk about pressure to perform. Lots of really interesting details such as most of the ocean (99%) remains unexplored and is below 2 km deep. This is a deep trawling vessel so many of the fish that get pulled up are interesting, if not bizarre, something that truly excites O'Hanlon's friend.

O'Hanlon rather vividly describes what it is like to get seasick (no thanks, I remember being seasick - it's a state where you wish you would die, but unfortunately also realize you won't.) Not to mention, the terror of that 1 in 100,000 "lump," what we might call a rogue wave that towers about the normal huge waves in a

storm. The crew, in the meantime, during the harsh weather is gutting fish with razor sharp knives.

I would have given this book more stars had he not spent so much time on the idiosyncratic characters. I prefer more detail about the technology and the social and cultural issues faced by the crew.

Stephan van der Linde says

Trawler is the book I read the last from O'Hanlon, but did not really like.

No journey through the jungle or Amazon-river but Redmond reports from a trawler, on the Atlantic Ocean.

Even though O'Hanlon's writing-style is good and with the familiar humour within, this book is too much about fish.

The descriptions of the very hard work, his efforts and the tiredness after, were absolutely imaginable.

But it is fish,fish,fish and fish. I know almost nothing about fish, but I can't really care about it either. It was too repeating..

When you are interested in fish, or working at sea on a fishing boat, than you will love it.

Not bad, but not for me.

Megan Pursell says

While I loved his other books - his journey to Borneo with James Fenton is a modern travel classic - this was too fish-centric.

R O'H travels in the worst time of year (I was never entirely sure of the reason for the timing) with deep sea trawlers crewed by Scots. RO'H is a biologist so he's fascinated by the different fish, me less so.

What I enjoyed about the book were the characters of the crew (not Scottish, but Orkneymen and Shetlanders a big difference to them). This is of course the closest I'll ever get to the experience.

Living in Seattle I have a deep suspicion of the environmental health of deep dredging the sea but then it wasn't really explained in that context. That's my 3 stars.

Go to Borneo or the Amazon with R O'H (even Africa) but you're not missing much if you skip this one.

Martin Budd says

Oh! The Horror! The Author's attempt at dialogue (in faux Scott's brogue) between himself and the trawler

men torpedo's this "Trawler".

Truly dire - all the worse for the carcass of what could have been a good book rotting between the pages. Redmond certainly suffers for his art during the writing of this book, the shame is the reader does to, the disjointed, rambling interaction between the two dimensional characters brings on a form of seasickness surely worse than any suffered by himself. - Please Redmond buy ANYTHING by Elmore Leonard and learn to write good dialogue.

Bookmarks Magazine says

In *Trawler*, O'Hanlon (*No Mercy, In Trouble Again*), a British naturalist and adventurer, takes readers on a hallucinogenic journey. Extraordinary (or nauseating, depending on the perspective) first-hand accounts of the ship, the close quarters, the smell, the fear, and the seasickness bring his experience to life. It's no picnic__just call *Trawler* a hellish travelogue or dark comedy as O'Hanlon's sleep-deprived sea companions slowly lose their minds. The best parts include conversations between the author and biologist Luke Bullough, who talk science as they examine their monstrous sea findings (portrayed in beautiful black and white drawings). The worst parts include these same musings, which a few critics described as overworked monologues. Still, armchair sailors will find much value in the unfamiliar, nightmarish world O'Hanlon depicts.

This is an excerpt from a review published in Bookmarks magazine.

Kenno82 says

The book follows the author as he braves Force-12 conditions to document life on a trawler fishing off the north of Scotland. The seas in this area present some of the roughest conditions across the globe due to colliding currents and Arctic winds.

I have to say that I really struggled with this book. The setting for the novel would usually lend itself to a story that I'd love. However, O'Hanlon writes in such a unique way that it can be tough going at times. The book is made up of huge slabs of meandering dialogue that are often nonsensical, reflecting the crew's sleep deprived state. While it's effective in representing the psyche of the crew and what they regularly have to push themselves through, it also means that you learn little of the desires, motivations and history of the crew. I can recall three or four memorable exchanges. For a book of near 350 pages, that's little reward.

Valerie says

The Deadlist Catch of books.

Elsa Ray says

This funny yet informative and saddening travel journal explores the life of the trawlermen of the Orkney islands. Travel writer Redmond O'Hanlon, a land-and-sleep loving Englishman, explores the wildest places of Great Britain, the North Atlantic, by joining the crew of an industrial trawler and heading out to sea in the worst season, into the mouth of a Force 12 winter storm. His tales of seasickness and chronic lack of sleep (trawlermen sleep only 48 hours in the three weeks they are at sea) are humorous, the descriptions of the weird and wonderful deep sea fish brought up delightful, and the stories given by the trawlermen sobering. This book's only flaw is O'Hanlon's tendency to include several-page long late-night conversations and musings aboard the trawler that are interesting, but irrelevant. This book has a similar style to a Bill Bryson work. If you like the sea, fish, storms, extreme travel or dry humor you will enjoy this book.

Peter Goodman says

"Trawler," by Redmond O'Hanlon. O'Hanlon, a naturalist who has written about treks in the Amazon, the Congo, in Borneo, etc., spends a few days aboard a Scots trawler off the Orkneys in January during storms ranging from Force 9 to Force 12 (hurricane). It's a lunatic adventure---the crew gets literally no sleep for about 10 days. They essentially go nuts, and so does O'Hanlon, who at 52 or so is 20 years older than anyone else on board. And they catch a lot of fish. The writing is a cross between precisely scientific and Ken Kesey. It's all about the unbelievable hardships of life aboard such a trawler, also touching on the lifeboatmen, evolution, creatures below 800 fathoms, how to find the perfect wife, alpha males, extreme seasickness, the writing of doctorates, Congolese aphrodisiacs, etc. British readers will probably enjoy all the Brit-Scot-Hebridean-Irish etc byplay. I was happy just to read about places with such names as Unst, Yell, Muckle Roe, Thorsno and Cape Wrath. Norlantean, the ship, sails from Scrabster.

Richard Schwindt says

Ever been seasick? If so you will be associated back into that particular horror shortly after you start on this book. Welcome to another nightmare journey with Redmond O'Hanlon. You will come away with three things from this book: a deep appreciation of the lives of fishermen in the North Atlantic, fascinating facts about marine biology and vicarious trauma (sort of kidding). If you live in a dull suburb, doing a dull job with dull people around you sizzle things up and read this book.

Brian Haverty says

I had written this on Amazon in 2005: I admit, I'm a fan, but I still think this is one of the best books I've read in a long time. Redmond O'Hanlon's style takes a bit of getting used to, but once you're there, that style can take you to amazing places. I saw that one [Amazon] reviewer recommended ignoring the "manic rants", but they are just one of the magic ways O'Hanlon draws you into what must have been a truly bizarre world of cold, hard work and sleeplessness.

Emile Poelman says

Somewhat hallucinogenic story of fishermen on a trawler in a force 12 gale. Lots of exciting info about the queer denizens of the deep which the trawler drags to the surface. I really liked the story, but then: I am a biologist...

If you don't like fish (even bizarre ones), or don't like the way men talk when they haven't slept for a week: avoid this book.

Otherwise enjoy this really different novel.

Jim says

This is the strangest of travel books: There are no views. It all takes place aboard a trawler from Scrabster that, alone of the Scottish fishing fleet, goes into the North Atlantic in January in the teeth of a Force 12 Hurricane. Author Redmond O'Hanlon pays fifty pounds a day for the privilege of assisting marine biologist Luke Bullough with his fish research and, whenever possible, gutting fish.

Trawler: A Journey Through the North Atlantic is perhaps less about travel than about the strange lives of trawler fishermen who get as little as three hours of sleep a night and become talkative and manic as they are deprived of their rest.

The conversations between the author and Luke are interesting, but probably more interesting is how the crew interact with one another under extreme stress. The real travel here is within the human mind and emotions.

This is a fascinating, one-of-a-kind book that deserves to be read.

Jim says

I was initially swept away by this book, by the enthusiasm O'Hanlon conveyed for the subject, the people and the experience. I've often wondered about the life of trawlermen and, if this is what it is really like, then wondering is more than enough! Sleep deprivation brings a job that literally drives you nuts, and maybe you'd have to be nuts to do it. The cold, the back-breaking labour, the fact that you're away from home for weeks on end....it takes a certain type to cope with it.

Monica says

Redmond O'Hanlon, a fifty something Oxford educated travel writer and danger junkie, manages to get himself aboard a North Sea trawler for a voyage in search of deep water fish and a force 11 or 12 gale. In January. His mate is his friend Luke Bullough, a young marine biology doctoral candidate and volunteer

lifeboat crewman. Luke is a crew member on the trawler with the additional responsibility of weighing, sexing and determining the age of the more unusual creatures that come up in the net as part of his academic research. Redmond's job is to try not to disgrace himself, to do a fair share of the gutting and weighing, and to document what goes on on the voyage.

The narrative is a manic stream of consciousness account of a harrowing, extremely dangerous and frequently hilarious trip. The sleep deprivation leads the men into ever more bizarre monologues, discussions on the meaning of life, the dangers of the sea, natural history, love, sex and death. And fish of course, and the economics and psychic perils of running a trawler. The descriptions of some of the odder creatures that live in that cold water at that depth are fascinating and unforgettable. I wish there were more pictures, though the drawings and photos that are there are great.
