



QUARTERLY NEWS SPLASH • ISSUE NO. 7

# OCTOBER IS OCTOPUS AWARENESS



© Rachel brooks


OCTOBER 2025  
ZEN4BLUE.ORG

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## NOTE FROM THE FOUNDER

### OCTOBER IS OCTOPUS AWARENESS

Few creatures capture the imagination quite like the Octopus—mysterious, clever, and endlessly fascinating. This October, we invite you to explore their world! Our cover, beautifully illustrated by internationally acclaimed Marine Wildlife Artist Rachel Brooks, draws you into their intelligence and adaptability. Inside, you'll find our Educational Infographic: Octopus Awareness and a Species Spotlight dedicated entirely to the octopus, designed to inspire curiosity and conservation.

 Want to hear Rachel tell her story in her own words? Check out her full interview in Episode 9 of the Balance4Blue Podcast available on YouTube and Apple Podcasts.

We're also thrilled to share new internship opportunities, global partnerships, and creative collaborations that allow anyone—regardless of formal academic background—to make a difference for the ocean.

 Don't miss your chance to join—or gift to a golf lover on your list—early bird tickets for our annual Charity Golf Tournament this Spring!

Dive in, explore, and make waves with Zen4Blue this October!

A heartfelt thank you to our sponsors, supporters, and volunteers—your dedication makes waves for the ocean every day!

- **Beverly Williams**  
Founder | CEO



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# **Octopuses Are Living Wonders - Protect Their Depth. Respect Their Genius!**

**LEARN – CONSERVE – DEFEND – SUSTAIN**



# NEW PARTNERSHIPS, NEW INTERNSHIPS

**Z**en4Blue is making waves this Fall! We're thrilled to announce several exciting partnerships that will expand our internship opportunities and elevate the experiences for our interns and citizen scientists.



**WORLDPACKERS**

First, we've officially joined forces with **Worldpackers**, becoming an approved internship host! This global connection allows Zen4Blue to welcome motivated, adventurous students and volunteers from around the world to dive into ocean conservation with us.

Ever dreamt of going to Belize to get your scuba certification? Join Zen4Blue in collaboration with **@casanimaladventures**, Cassandra Ray, as we embark on a journey into the coral reefs of the Caribbean Sea in pursuit of the invasive lionfish, hosted by our new partner ReefCI. Members of Zen4Blue receive a special invite and discount code in November's newsletter. Not a member yet? Join the ocean family today at [www.zen4blue.org/memberships](http://www.zen4blue.org/memberships)



**CASSANDRA RAY**



## 828 Charters



Next up, our collaboration with 828 Charters takes our internship offerings over the water. Our new Maritime Internships with hands-on, over-the-water education experiences, our interns now have the chance to learn while cruising the beautiful waters of Tampa Bay. Who said classroom learning couldn't include a salty sea breeze? Out of state or international interns? No problem! Desir Executive Transport has joined the Zen4Blue family as our newest sponsor, providing seamless airport transfers for our interns. With Desir at the wheel, interns can arrive relaxed, ready, and yes—riding with style!

## Desir Executive Transport

Out of state or international interns? No problem! Desir Executive Transport has joined the Zen4Blue family as our newest sponsor, providing seamless airport transfers for our interns.

**With Desir at the wheel, interns can arrive relaxed, ready, and yes—riding with style!**



These new partnerships reflect Zen4Blue's commitment to providing enriching, hands-on experiences while fostering meaningful global connections. We're excited to see our interns grow, learn, and make a tangible impact in our community and beyond.

Want to join the adventure? Whether you're a student looking for a hands-on internship, a volunteer eager to make a difference, or a local business interested in sponsoring our programs, there's a place for you at Zen4Blue.

Visit [www.zen4blue.org](http://www.zen4blue.org) to get started today!



Come join hands with the ocean community for a day filled with bogeys, birdies and putts - **for a purpose!**

Join us on **Earth Day 2026** for the Zen4Blue Charity Golf Tournament at the world-renowned Innisbrook Golf Resort, home of the legendary Copperhead Course and the prestigious PGA TOUR's Valspar Championship. Walk the same course as the pros while making a meaningful impact.



**April 22, 2026**



**7am - 2pm EDT**



**36750 US Highway 19 North  
Palm Harbour, Florida 34686, USA**

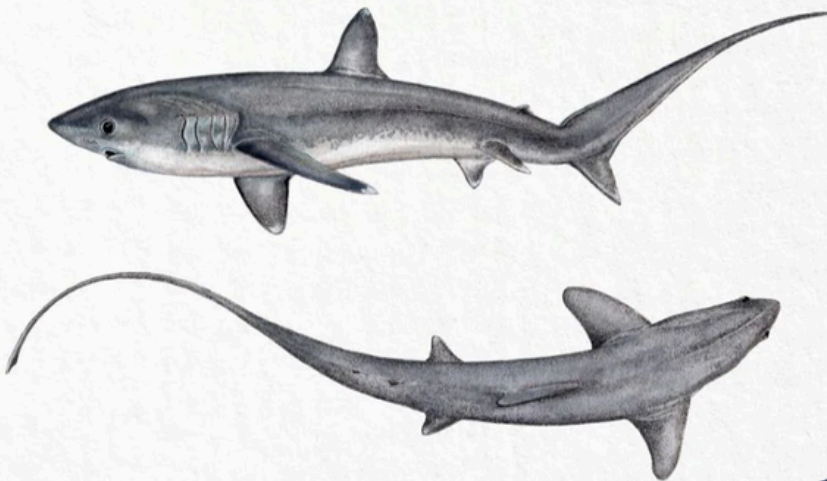
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Visit [www.zen4blue.org/golf](http://www.zen4blue.org/golf) for tickets and sponsorship details

# RACHEL BROOKS ART

Rachel is an internationally acclaimed Wildlife Artist and Scientific Illustrator based in the Scottish Highland town of Oban. She specialises in marine wildlife, capturing high levels of intricate detail using ink. Drawing from her extensive background in Zoology, Marine Biology, and the Scuba Industry, she has immersed herself in the field, spending years amidst her fascinating subjects.



Visit Rachel's Website:

[www.rachelbrooksart.com](http://www.rachelbrooksart.com)

Follow Rachel on Instagram:

[@rachelbrooksart](https://www.instagram.com/rachelbrooksart)



# Zen4Blue Ecosystem Infogr

## WHAT IS AN OCTOPUS?

An octopus is a soft-bodied mollusc with eight limbs, classified into the order Octopoda and grouped into the Cephalopoda class (which also includes squids, cuttlefish, and nautiloids). They are bilaterally symmetrical, have two eyes, and a beaked mouth located at the centre point of their eight limbs. They are very flexible and can easily change shape, making them skilled at evading predators.

### How Many Species?

There are around 300 species of octopus worldwide.

### Three Interesting Octopus Facts

Octopuses are known for their high intelligence, and are even known to use tools, a behaviour that was previously thought to only be characteristic of vertebrates.

They are also known for their ability to camouflage and change colour, which is extremely useful in avoiding predation.

If they lose limbs, they can regrow them.

## OCTOPUS HABITAT

### Where Do They Live?

Octopus live in all five of the world's oceans. This encompasses a wide diversity of environments, from the shallow, tropical waters of coral reefs and rocky coastlines to the cold depths of the deep sea (which includes the pelagic zones, abyssal trenches, and the seabed).

Though each octopus species' preferred habitat may vary according to their specific adaptations, they tend to be territorial and solitary animals. As such, they create dens in natural formations such as holes, crevices, or even under rocks and coral. They may also use their muscular tentacles to dig burrows. These structures are where the octopus lives, sleeps, and hunts.

## WHAT YOU CAN

### Help Reduce O

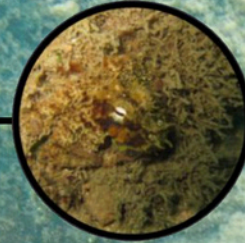
Limit your use of single-use plastics in your lifestyle – reduce, reuse, and recycle. Recycle your waste in trash cans so that it doesn't end up in the ocean. Don't litter on beaches, and volunteer to clean up.

### Be a Responsib

If you buy octopus at the supermarket, choose products that are sustainably farmed. Look for certifications of octopus meat to help.

### Use Non-Toxic Cl

At work and at home, use non-toxic cleaning products to reduce pollution in our oceans, which helps protect marine life.



# Graphic: Octopus Awareness



## HUMAN IMPACT & CHALLENGES

### Overfishing

Many octopus fisheries are now considered overfished, and new fisheries continue to open around the world, leading to sharp declines in octopus populations in places like Southeast Asia, according to a survey by Endangered Species International that took place between 2013 – 2018.

### Farming

Approximately 27,000,000 kg of octopus is farmed globally every year according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. This practice, known as 'aquaculture', leads to significant marine pollution from nitrogen and phosphorus released from feces and food decomposition, contamination from fertilizers, algacides, herbicides, disinfectants, and antibiotics, and loss of natural habitat (e.g., mangroves and tidal zones) used for farms.

### Pollution

Octopus species all over the world are under grave threat due to human activities. Climate change, which raises ocean temperatures and acidity levels, is a serious threat to octopus habitats and food sources. The destruction of habitat means that octopuses have fewer places where they can safely breed and hunt, which threatens population levels.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

### Reduce Ocean Detritus

1. Incorporate the three R's in your lifestyle.  
2. Ensure you place non-biodegradable items in the trash so they don't end up in waterways and oceans.  
3. Participate in cleanup efforts if possible.

### Be a Responsible Consumer

1. When buying octopus, ensure that you select octopus that is sustainably sourced or farmed.  
2. Reduce your consumption of octopus to help lower demand.

### Use Eco-Friendly Cleaning Products

1. Use eco-friendly cleaning products, as this reduces pollution in the ocean.  
2. Preserve existing octopus habitats.

## WHAT DO THEY EAT?

Octopus diet varies depending on species and habitat. Some examples include:

### Gastropods

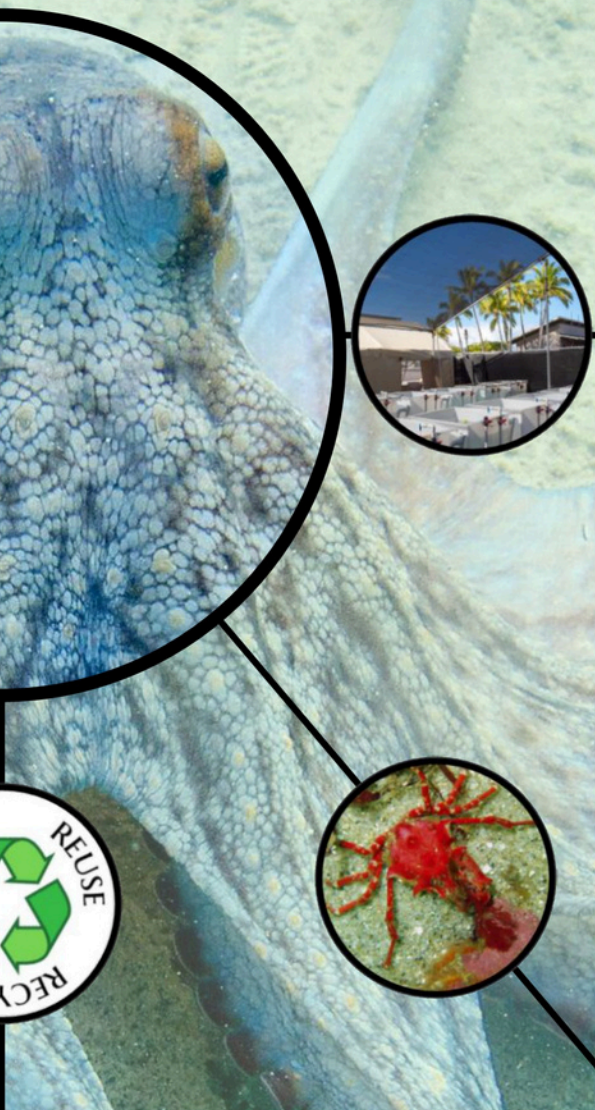
Snails (e.g., whelks such as *Kelletia kelletii*, abalone such as *Haliotis rufescens*, and many others), and sea slugs (e.g., *Aplysia californica*).

### Bivalves

Clams (e.g., *Ruditapes philippinarum*) and mussels (e.g., *Mytilus edulis*).

### Crustaceans

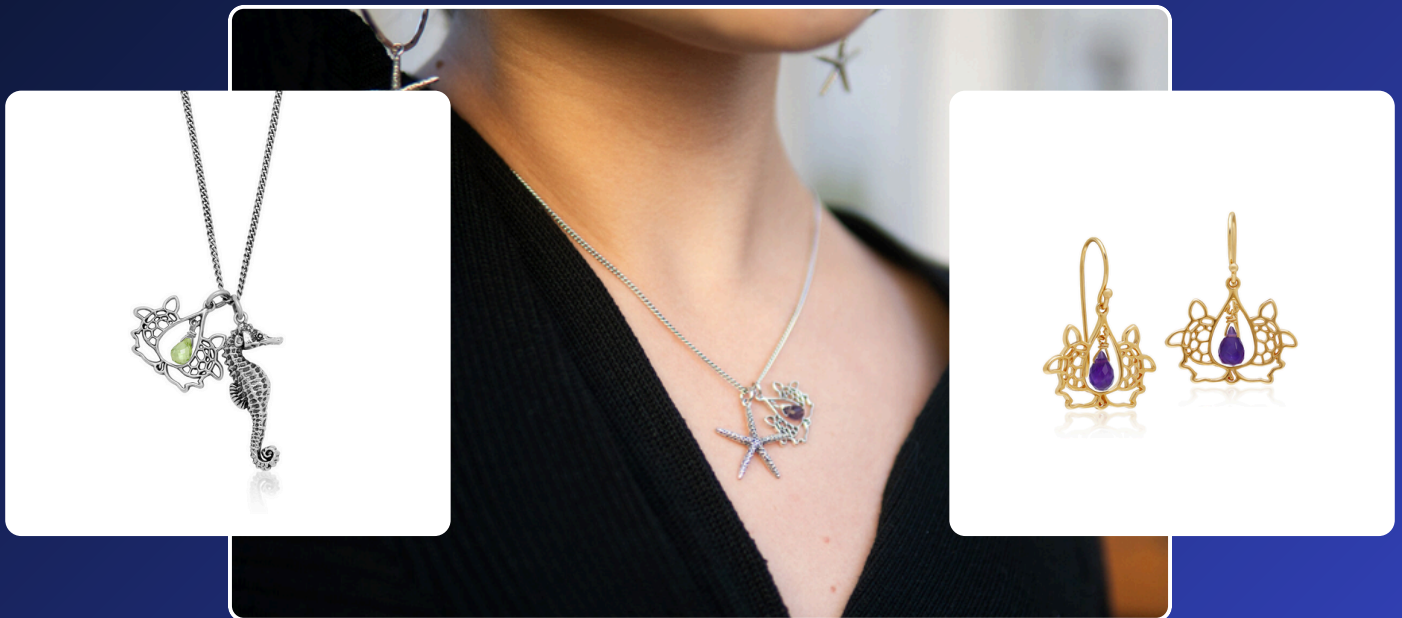
Lobsters and crabs (e.g., *Pugettia gracilis*, pictured).





EXPLORE THE

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# Species Spotlight:

## October is **Octopus Awareness**

This October, Zen4Blue is highlighting some of the ocean's most remarkable animals, octopuses. Known for their intelligence, adaptability, and almost otherworldly abilities, octopuses have captured the imagination of scientists and ocean lovers. To celebrate Octopus Awareness, this Species Spotlight features three extraordinary representatives: the Blue-ringed Octopus, the Giant Pacific Octopus, and the Mimic Octopus. Each demonstrates a different survival strategy and reminds us why these creatures deserve our awareness and protection.



### **The Dazzling but Deadly: Blue-Ringed Octopus**

This beauty hides a dangerous secret: the Blue-ringed Octopus produces tetrodotoxin, a venom more than 1,000 times stronger than cyanide. A single bite can paralyze within minutes. Despite its potency, it is not aggressive and generally only bites when provoked.

Its story is a reminder of balance in the ocean, its vivid warning colors signal danger, but also highlight the fragile elegance of a creature playing an essential role in reef ecosystems. Respect, rather than fear, is the lesson this octopus offers.

The Blue-ringed Octopus (*Hapalochlaena* spp.) may be small, usually no more than 8 inches, but it carries a reputation far larger than its body. Found in tide pools and coral reefs across the Indo-Pacific, this species is instantly recognizable for the brilliant blue rings that flash across its skin when threatened.

**The Blue-Ringed Octopus produces tetrodotoxin, a venom more than 1,000 times stronger than cyanide. A single bite can paralyze within minutes.**

## The Giant of the Deep: Giant Pacific Octopus

On the other end of the spectrum lies the Giant Pacific Octopus (*Enteroctopus dofleini*), also called the Red Pacific Octopus for its reddish-brown skin. It is the largest of all octopus species, with some individuals weighing over 150 pounds and stretching an arm span of nearly 20 feet.

Inhabiting the cold waters of the North Pacific, from California up to Alaska and across to Japan, this species has earned a reputation as one of the most intelligent invertebrates. In aquariums, they have solved puzzles, opened jars, and even recognized individual caretakers. In the wild, they are stealthy predators, feeding on crabs, clams, and fish, and occasionally tackling prey as large as small sharks.



Yet their lives are surprisingly short, averaging just 3 to 5 years. Females display a remarkable devotion to their offspring, guarding and oxygenating thousands of eggs for months without eating until they die. The Giant Pacific Octopus embodies both strength and sacrifice, making it one of the ocean's most awe-inspiring animals.

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## The Master of Disguise: Mimic Octopus

If the Blue-ringed Octopus symbolizes danger and the Giant Pacific Octopus symbolizes strength, the Mimic Octopus (*Thaumoctopus mimicus*) embodies creativity. Discovered in the 1990s off Indonesia, it shocked scientists with its remarkable ability to imitate other animals.

This slender species, with its brown-and-white striped body, can flatten its arms to resemble a flatfish, coil them to imitate sea snakes, or spread them to mimic the spines of a lionfish. These impersonations are not just camouflage; they are bold performances designed to deter predators.



The mimic octopus is living proof that survival in the ocean can be about brains as much as brawn. By using behavioral mimicry, it demonstrates one of the most advanced survival strategies in the natural world.

# Why Awareness Matters

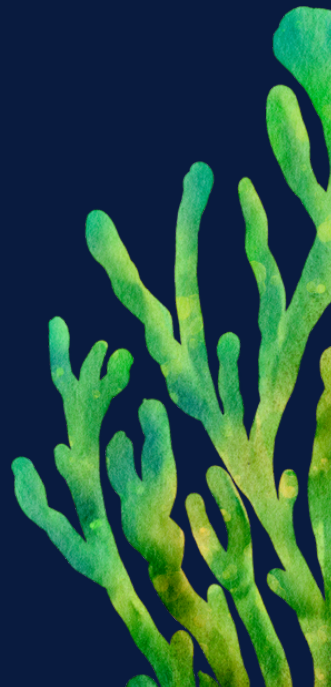
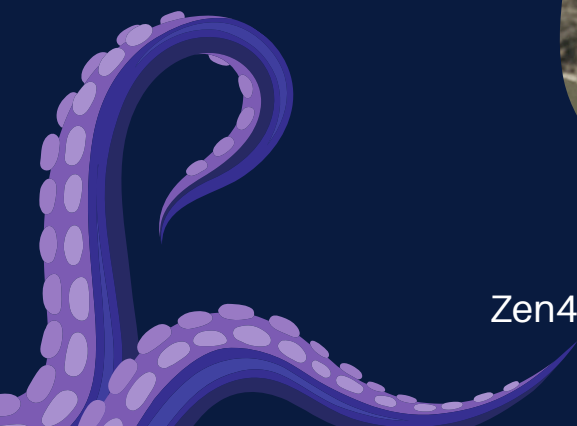
From the venomous flash of the Blue-ringed, to the colossal strength of the Giant Pacific, to the playful deception of the Mimic Octopus, each of these species highlights a different wonder of evolution. Together, they remind us that octopuses are far more than curiosities of the sea; they are vital players in marine ecosystems.

But octopuses face growing challenges. Rising ocean temperatures, habitat loss, and human exploitation put pressure on their populations. Raising awareness is the first step toward protecting them. By learning about their diversity, intelligence, and ecological importance, we can better advocate for the conservation of these remarkable animals. This October, join us in celebrating octopuses, not just as symbols of mystery and wonder, but as living creatures whose survival is tied to the health of our oceans.

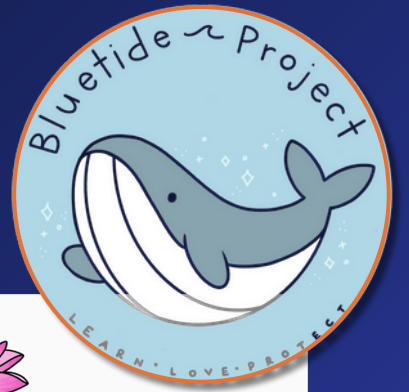


**ALLISON SHAFFER**

Zen4Blue Marine and Ocean Educator



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# BLUE FRIDAY

## SPECIALS!

RETREATS | ADVENTURES | GOLF | GIFTS

Zen4Blue is celebrating Blue Friday 2025 with special deals and event offers!

EARTH DAY 4 INTERNS Charity  
Golf Tournament Tickets

Discount Coupons for  
Zen4Blue Gift Shop

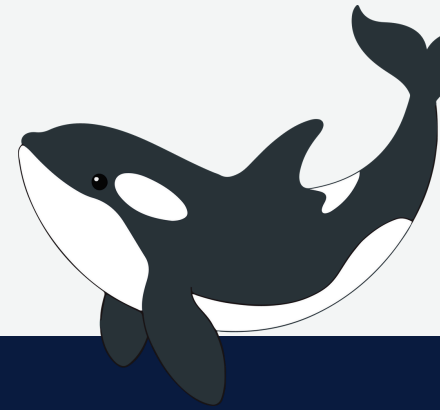
Tranquil Retreats



All offers go live Blue Friday,  
**November 28 2025!**

# ECO-FRIENDLY HOLIDAY IDEAS

by Jennifer Powers



While it's not even Halloween yet, a lot of people don't wait for November to begin holiday planning. Starting your gift prep sooner rather than later gives things time to arrive while reducing stress and the need for express delivery, especially if you shop local.

Here are some fun and easy tips for a more eco-friendly holiday season

Look for products with sustainable packaging & eco-friendly ingredients

Store uncrumpled gift bags with decorations, ribbons, and bows for reuse the next year

Seasonally decorative boxes for smaller gifts can be used multiple times or can be repurposed into decorations

E-cards are fun little holiday souvenirs in your email that are eco-friendly; see if you can find one that supports a cause

Plan to reuse metallic, glossy-looking wrapping papers since they can't be recycled

Keep an eye on your favourite social media platform like @zen4blue and @the\_merkids for holiday decoration DIYs - some even specify using recycled materials

## PRO TIP:

If ordering multiple gifts from one place, try to "batch order" them all together to save time and shipping hassle to reduce your carbon footprint.

LED lights are better than incandescents for environmental and economic energy saving

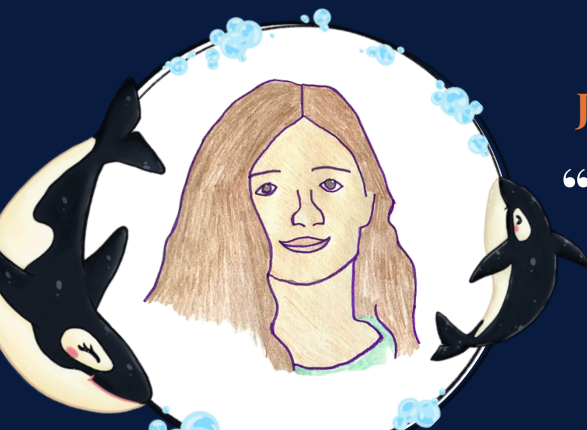
Set the table sustainably with washable napkins

Take time to really explore nature and appreciate the beauty of winter, especially snowy areas

Add another layer of green by throwing pieces of nature, such as small boughs and pine cones, into decoration ideas

Look into sustainable replanting options when getting a real tree for Christmas

And finally, one of my favorite gifts - many animal charities have kits where you can adopt or sponsor an animal, with a certificate, a facts pamphlet and a toy!



## Jennifer Powers

“A life-long animal lover, artist and writer dipping my toes into the ocean of marine conservation because I want to use my hobbies for something meaningful and impactful. I have an affinity for Southern Resident orcas, and I'm working on an article about them for next year!”

# MARINE WILDLIFE ARTIST

## RACHEL BROOKS

Not every ocean career requires a lab coat or a degree in marine science. Sometimes, the ocean calls in the form of creativity. This month's Career Highlight shines a light on Rachel Brooks, an internationally acclaimed Marine Wildlife Artist and Scientific Illustrator based in the Scottish Highlands.

Rachel's art is more than beautiful imagery—it's storytelling. Using fine ink detail, she brings marine life to paper in a way that inspires both wonder and conservation. While her work celebrates species from around the world, she is especially passionate about overlooked marine wildlife of the UK, and she uses her art to advocate for shark conservation.



# RACHEL BROOKS



Her path wasn't straightforward. Originally set on a career in art, a summer volunteering on a whale and dolphin research project shifted her trajectory toward the ocean. That experience led her into the scuba diving industry, where she became a PADI instructor and spent over eight years beneath the surface. From swimming with whale sharks in Western Australia to managing a dive center in remote Sulawesi, her underwater adventures gave her the firsthand knowledge that now informs her art. Every brushstroke and ink line carries the accuracy of someone who has observed these creatures in their natural element.

Rachel is more than an artist—she is a communicator, a photographer, and a passionate advocate for the ocean. Her story proves that you don't need a formal academic career to make an impact in marine conservation. With passion and creativity, you can carve your own unique path to helping the sea.

Rachel Brooks is an internationally acclaimed Wildlife Artist and Scientific Illustrator based in the Scottish Highland town of Oban. She specialises in marine wildlife, capturing high levels of intricate detail using ink. Rachel designed and generously donated the art for this month's cover illustration. You can find her at [rachelbrooksart.com](http://rachelbrooksart.com) and follow her on Instagram [@rachelbrooksart](https://www.instagram.com/rachelbrooksart).

 Want to hear Rachel tell her story in her own words? Check out her full interview on the Balance4Blue Podcast Career Highlight Miniseries, available now on YouTube and Apple Podcasts





PRESENTS



# Balance4Blue

PODCAST

Ever wondered what it's like to build a career beneath the waves?

Dive into the **Zen4Blue Podcast**, where passion meets purpose under the sea. Each episode spotlights inspiring professionals shaping the future of our oceans, from marine biologists to marine wildlife artists. Discover how they turned curiosity into careers that make a real splash.

**Get inspired. Press play.**

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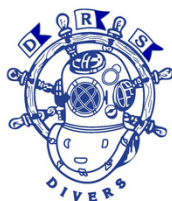
# Thank you



We want to express our heartfelt appreciation for our Zen4Blue community. Your support, curiosity, and engagement continue to drive our mission forward, creating opportunities for learning, exploration, and connection. Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

— The Zen4Blue Team

## Thanks to our wonderful sponsors, partners, and supporters



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Madeira Beach, FL