

A misty forest with tall, thin trees and a green forest floor. The text is overlaid on the image.

GLOBAL CHORUS

365 VOICES ON THE
FUTURE OF THE PLANET

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AUGUST 11

EXEQUIEL EZCURRA

My lifelong friend Enriqueta Velarde spends every spring studying seabirds in Isla Rasa, a small flat island in the Gulf of California. Single-handedly, alone in the remote island, she has done that for over thirty years. Through her research, she has restored the health of the island and saved two species, the Elegant Tern and the Heermann's Gull, from almost certain extinction. She is a hero.

Fifteen years ago, analyzing her painstakingly collected data set, we found that when the equatorial currents slow down, marine productivity collapses and the birds cannot find enough sardines to feed their chicks, which die tragically in their own nests. The fact that the speed of ocean currents twelve thousand miles away could predict the fate of a million seabird chicks was for me an

epiphany, a sudden revelation of the deep intricate nature of the biosphere. The complex ecological processes that drive life in our planet were much more connected than I had ever realized before. I understood vividly that the Earth has processes that bind all life together, and in the small Isla Rasa we could fathom the pulse of the biosphere.

Since then, my research changed, and so did my view of life. I became much more interested in understanding the enigmatic connections between the land and the sea, and devoted much more of my time and efforts to advancing conservation science; because, how can we allow Nature to be destroyed if we don't even know the impact this destruction will have on the continuity of life on Earth?

— Exequiel Ezcurra,
ecologist with the National Research System of Mexico and
University of California, Riverside