

Preface

As has often been said, Antarctica is a land of extremes. Today's environmental context, however, may be challenging the very attributes that make Antarctica enchanting; the coldest, windiest, driest, remotest continent on earth is being threatened by conditions within human control. Antarctica's associated faunal and planktonic communities may begin to suffer as well, and although they are often microscopic, emphasis is given in this thesis (particularly in the beginning) to the plankton because their importance to the Antarctic and world ecosystem cannot be overemphasized. This project is intended to investigate these Antarctic issues in the hope of increasing awareness and public concern, and possibly to aid my plan for the institution or expansion of marine policy and law programs at several American law schools, with an eventual focus on Antarctic issues.

I have organized the writing in three parts, which I have titled "Ice," "Reflections," and "Fire." The "Ice" section concerns the planktonic communities forming the foundation of the ecosystem, and within this broad category I focus on the euphausiids (*Euphausia superba*) and unspecified Antarctic diatoms. In the beginning, I also explain the various oceanographic processes to be referred to within the section. The second part, "Reflections," is devoted to a discussion of my own Antarctic travels onboard the M/V Polar Star between 30 December, 2006 and 8 January, 2007, chronologically organized, and including biographies of selected fauna prevalent at each location. Finally, "Fire" focuses on the main issues of the Antarctic region, including global warming, unscrupulous fishing practices, tourism, and, briefly, the ozone hole.