



Q & A THE ECO-WARRIOR

Sea Shepherd boss Captain Paul Watson on winning the whale wars, Greenpeace's incompetence and do-gooder celebs...

You were one of the founders of Greenpeace. How is Sea Shepherd different from Greenpeace?

Sea Shepherd is different from other groups (like Greenpeace) in that we're not a protest group; we're not protesting anything. We're an anti-poaching organisation; an interventionist group against illegal activities – one of the reasons why we don't get arrested and we don't get sued.

So are you and Greenpeace on good terms these days? Do you go on missions together to fight whalers in the southern seas?

We asked them to come help us save whales in the Southern Ocean this year. They refused, then they tried to take all the credit for what we did at the end! In their press releases they claim that whaling was ended due to "educational campaigns" that they were busy conducting in Japan! It's okay, I don't have much use for big organisations anyway. The real strength of the whole conservation movement has always been small organisations and individuals. The big groups get so bogged down in bureaucracy

Yeah, we get called "eco-terrorists" and things and my answer to that is, "Arrest us, or shut up!" It gets a little irritating. I was giving a talk at an FBI academy once when one of the agents said to me that Sea Shepherd is treading a pretty fine line when it comes to the law, and my reply was well, who cares how fine the line is? As long as that line isn't being crossed. And Sea Shepherd has never crossed the line.

Celebs love Sea Shepherd. This year you had Avatar-babe Michelle Rodriguez on board. Did she dig in and help out, or was she just there on a publicity trip?

Oh no, Michelle was a very energetic crew member. She just pitched in and got involved, working on the deck and on the bridge. Darryl Hannah did the same thing a couple of years ago. And Aidan Quinn came with us one time too, so not only are the celebs good workers, they also attract a lot of attention to what we're doing. Richard Dean Anderson, Pierce Brosnan, Christian Bale and William Shatner are active members on our advisory board, so I always

what it pretty much is, hurtling through space). Like any spaceship, it has a life support system that has to be maintained. There are two types of species on this ship: passengers – us humans – and crew – worms, insects, bacteria and fish. The passengers are having a great time, playing shuffleboard and doing whatever we want. But it's the crew that runs the ship. They maintain the integrity of the spaceship, they give us the air we breathe and they clean up our dirt and mess. And we are killing off the crew.

But surely the crew regenerates, so it's okay then?

There is only so much crew that you can kill before your spaceship has some serious problems with life support. And I don't think that people understand this! I tried to get this point of view across a couple of years ago in the States and everybody got completely outraged. They demanded to know how I could believe that worms are more important than people! I told them I only said it because worms are more important than people! Worms can live on earth without people. People can't live on earth without worms. Fish are more important than people because we need them, they don't need us. Ants and bees are more important than we are – and we've got to accept this, if we're going to survive on this planet. The earth controls us; we don't control the earth.

Is the world going to end in a ball of flames in 2012, like the ancient Mayans predicted?

No. When people talk about "the wisdom of the ancients", I always say that, y'know – the ancients couldn't have been all that wise – they all died out eventually! I actually think humans are full of it.

Would you be willing to die to protect marine wildlife? Do you think it will ever eventually come to that?

It's been close. There have been so many skirmishes with whalers, sealers, fishermen; you name it! Last year one of our boats was cut in half by the Japanese whaler the Shonin Maru Number 2 and in 2008 I actually got shot. Fortunately, I was wearing a bulletproof vest.

Save the whales: check. Who will you be saving next?

We will be officially protecting the territorial waters of Palau in the Pacific Ocean. Our ships the Steve Irwin and Gojira are getting ready to go after poachers operating off the coast of Libya and in the summer, we're going to try and protect pilot whales in the Faroe Islands. **FHM**

Are you willing to die to protect the fish? In 2008 I actually got shot. Fortunately, I was wearing a bulletproof vest

and fund-raising while not actually doing anything. Greenpeace spends \$70 million a year on fund-raising.

The Japanese love their whaling. How do you handle them?

It's been seven years of us going down to the Southern Ocean and every year we got stronger and every year they got weaker. We've cost them \$200 million in losses; that was the objective from the beginning: to sink them economically. Besides, I don't think the Japanese government is going to be subsidising their illegal whaling activities any more. They have other priorities right now; whaling is going to be very far down on their list of priorities.

Still, they must be pretty pissed off with you!

Yeah, there's always a lot of opposition to what we do. The Japanese government actually called up the Dutch, Australian and the New Zealand ambassadors and said they had to stop us. But since there's been no crime committed, Japan hasn't laid any charges against us; they know that what they're doing is illegal.

Some of your critics will argue that what you're doing is illegal...

VITALS

Captain Paul Watson

Born Toronto, Canada

Age 60

Diet Vegan

Bibliography

Sea Shepherd: My Fight for Whales And Seals, Earthforce!

An Earth Warrior's Guide To Strategy, Ocean Warrior: My Battle To End The Illegal Slaughter On The High Seas, Seal Wars: 25 Years On The Frontlines With The Harp Seals