

Paul Watson-6-7-21

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[00:00:36] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:00:36] Hi, and welcome to the innovative mindset podcast. I'm your host Izolda Trakhtenberg on the show. You get my conversations with peak performing thought leaders, creatives, and entrepreneurs. We explore how you can innovate through creativity, compassion, and collaboration. I believe that innovation combined with compassion and creative thinking can save the world and I aim to bring you ways.

[00:00:58] You can do it too. [00:01:00] If you're enjoying the show, I'd be super grateful. If you could support it by buying me a cup of coffee, you can buy me a cup of @buymeacoffee.com slash is older T and now let's get on with the show.

[00:01:20] Hey there and welcome to the innovative mindset podcast. My name is Izolda Trakhtenberg. I am thrilled that you are here and I am incredibly honored and thrilled that today's guest is here. Captain Paul Watson is a Canadian Marine conservation activist who founded the direct action group sea shepherd in 1977.

[00:01:39] You're going to love all of this. Trust me, Watson was one of the founding members and directors of Greenpeace, but in 1977, he left Greenpeace and founded the sea shepherd conservation society. I renounced speaker accomplished author master Mariner and lifelong environmentalist. Captain Watson has been awarded many honors for his dedication to the oceans and to the planet [00:02:00] among the many accommodations for his work.

[00:02:02] He received the Genesis award for lifetime achievement in 1998 was named one of the top 20 environmental heroes of the 20th century by time magazine in 2000 and was inducted into the U S animal rights hall of fame in Washington, DC. In 2002, he was also awarded the Amazon peace prize by the president of Ecuador in 2007.

[00:02:22] In 2012, captain Watson became the only, the second person after captain Jack who stole it. You know how much I love Jocko still. I talk about them all the time. So after Jack Christo to be awarded the Juul Vern award dedicated to environmentalist and adventures in 2019, he was awarded a commendation from governor Ned Lamont from the state of Connecticut for 50 years as an environmental conservation activist, he's been described as the world's most aggressive, most determined, most active and most effective defender of wildlife.

[00:02:52] Captain Watson. I am so honored to have you here. Thank you so much for being on the podcast. I asked I, [00:03:00] there are so many things that I am, I, I want to talk to you about, but one sort of rises to the top. And the first thing is what started this? What started your passion to defend the environment to defend Marine.

[00:03:20] Wildlife. Where did it begin for you and, and how has it grown into who you are and what you do today?

[00:03:29] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:03:29] I was raised in a small fishing village in Eastern Canada. And when I was 10 years old, I spent the entire summer swimming with a family of beavers had a wonderful summer. But the next summer, when I went back, I couldn't find the beavers anywhere.

[00:03:42] I found out that trappers had taken them all during the winter. And that made me very angry. So I that winter, when I was 11, I began to walk the trap lines and free the animals and destroy the traps. And I guess I've been doing the same thing for the last 60 years in,

[00:03:58] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:03:58] in one form or another, for [00:04:00] sure.

[00:04:00] So there there's so much in, in that, in that story, the, the injustice that you saw, that, that the beavers, they seem to me, animals are. To be revered, but also I feel like they're my friends. And so when I look at what you did saving, saving the beavers, the following summer, sort of in honor of the family that, that was killed the previous year, how, how do you feel about the creatures we share the world with?

[00:04:31] What do they mean to you?

[00:04:35] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:04:35] We,

[00:04:35]

[00:04:35] We need to live in harmony with all species of both plants and animals on this planet. If we're going to survive all life is interdependent. You know, the strength of an ecosystem is in diversity and And the interdependence and if we don't, then we're simply not going to survive.

[00:04:51] And that, that is a reality. The problem is, is that over the last few thousand years, we've developed this perspective, which I call well it's [00:05:00] anthropocentrism, which is we're the best word dominant everything's about us. It's created for us. And in fact that's, that's a big lie. I mean, really, we're just a bunch of overly conceited, naked apes who've become divine legends in our own.

[00:05:13] But we have to adapt more of a biocentric perspective. That was the perspective of people tens of thousands of years ago, and the perspective of many indigenous cultures today, this understanding that we're part of the whole we're part of everything and everything is interrelated. And unless we do, we're just simply not going to survive.

[00:05:30] You know, a few years ago I was called up by Brett Hume, a reporter for the Fox network, and he said, I heard that you said that bees, trees, worms and fish were more important than people. And I said, yeah, I said that, you said, how could you say something so outrageous? I said, well because bees trees, vision worms are more important than people.

[00:05:51] That's an ecological factor. They can live here without us. We can't live here without them. We need them. They don't need us ecologically. They're far more important than we are. [00:06:00] And until we accept that the reality of of that interdependence and that diversity, then we're simply not going to make it, you know, since 1950, we've seen a 20% diminishment in phytoplankton populations in the, in the ocean.

[00:06:13] And phytoplankton provides between 70 and 80% of the oxygen that we breathe. If I to plankton goes extinct, We die. We don't live on this planet without it. That's how intimately connected we are to so many species. We can't live in a world without bees. We can't live in a world without worms. We can't live in a world without a certain bacterias.

[00:06:36] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:06:36] Ah, taking all of that in. Yeah. I, I agree with you 110%. I worked at NASA for many years, doing earth systems, science trainings, teaching students, teaching diplomats, teaching professors all about this interdependence, this, this entire system that we all share. The thing that, that what you said about the phytoplankton, for example, yes, 70 days, 80% [00:07:00] of the world's oxygen, 22% is produced by the Amazon rainforest.

[00:07:05] The question then becomes if we don't, if we don't pay attention to these incredible warning signs, some say that we're already past the point of no return. How, how we, I think we're thinking short term. So the question then becomes, how do we change minds? What do we need to do to get people, to change their minds and start seeing these issues as something that's imminent, that that is endemic and that we need to do something about as a, as a global.

[00:07:37] Society rather than just one pocket here in one pocket there.

[00:07:42] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:07:42] Well, there's two paths into the future. One is where human humanity decides that they want to live in harmony with other species and survive on the other path is that we do nothing. And in that case, nature will take over and and we'll just we'll solve the problem for us.

[00:07:57] We'll probably get a good swift ecological [00:08:00] kick in the rear end. We're starting to see that right now, you know, in 1995, Lori Garrett wrote a book called the coming plague where she predicted the emergence of more and more zoonotic transmission of viruses. And also on top of that, the release of pathogens from melting permafrost, Now, you know, for the most part, we ignored haunted virus, Bola, even aids west Nile stares, Mars.

[00:08:25] It, you know, it didn't affect us, but now we've got COVID, which is global and suddenly, whoa, where'd this come from? Unfortunately, this is a harbinger of more and Morrison OnDeck, transmitted viruses to come because we're living out of balance and out

of sync with the natural world. Now, the reason this is happening is, is when you destroy or diminish ecosystems or species, the viruses associated with those systems with those species.

[00:08:49] They have to go somewhere. And 8 billion of us were pretty attractive hosts. That's where they're going to come. They're there. They're going to go to so animals, which are close to us, like anything for bats or, or [00:09:00] or chimpanzees or pigs or whatever, they're going to transmit those viruses. I mean, we get the flu from birds and from pigs, we got the Corona virus, the common cold from horses because of our close long-term association with them.

[00:09:13] But now we're, we're going to see more and more of that. And unfortunately, you know, vaccinations are a band-aid, they're not the they're not going to solve the problem. The only way this problem is going to be solved is by the protection of ecosystems and the protection of a species. And that interdependence

[00:09:32] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:09:32] I yes, I thousand times. Yes. And, and yet I, I keep coming back to that idea of what, what rational. What practical steps could we lay out as the first step? What could we, as people who are going, wait, wait, this is important. We need, these are Harbinger's of really bad things to come. Yes, we can terrify people.

[00:09:58] But what is, what is the first step that [00:10:00] someone could take? Who goes, okay, wait, let me try and do something about this.

[00:10:03] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:10:03] Well, we can't depend upon governments because politics is the art of the possible that is politicians have limits to what they can do or else they fall Faber. And they're no longer there.

[00:10:13] It really comes down to the passion the imagination and the courage of individuals. That's what changes the world. That's, what's always changed the world and I'm seeing this more and more with many, many people, young people, especially dedicating themselves to protecting this ecosystem or this particular species there.

[00:10:30] And, you know, because of Diane Fossey, we still have mountain gorillas in Rwanda because of David Wingate. We, the Bermuda storm Petrel did not go extinct in, in Bermuda. And look at what Greta Thumper who's a 16 year old is as accomplished as far as you know, talking about climate change in that really it's individuals that changed the world.

[00:10:49] And I always say that the solution to an impossible situation is to find the impossible answer. Now in 1972, the very idea that Nelson [00:11:00] Mandela would become president to South Africa was impossible. It was unthinkable, and yet the impossible became possible. So that's what I hold. Those that people will come up with solutions but it's going to come from the imagination and the courage and the passion of individuals.

[00:11:19] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:11:19] It's funny. This is called this, the show is called the innovative mindset podcast. And I focus on talking with thought leaders and creative people who are looking at sustainability, environmental conservation, and creative ways to come up with these solutions. And I talked to people who are doing bartering apps and, and

storytelling apps and conservation, absent and vegan sort of vegan review apps and all of this.

[00:11:44] So it is happening. And yet the, the next generation, the children, a lot of times they're growing up, not, not their fault, but they're growing up ignorant of what these realities are in many ways. So if you, if you were going to be [00:12:00] talking to a class of fourth graders, what would you say to them to spark their interest and curiosity about these topics?

[00:12:09] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:12:09] Well, if they're fourth graders, I would probably not say too much to them. I'd probably just ask them what they think, what they feel. You know, children are born with a natural intuition an understanding of the natural world to give an example, way, way back in the seventies, I had the opportunity to speak to a school in the queen, Charlotte islands.

[00:12:27] It was on a high day Indian reservation. And in the morning we spoke to kindergarten and middle school in the mid day and the seniors and the now here's what I discovered. I walked into this kindergarten class and I said, how many of you can speak? Hydac every one of them did how many kids or know anything about Wales?

[00:12:42] Didn't have to say a thing. Just listen to all their stories about whales by mid school, by by mid school that the Ms. School children, they only half of them spoke the language. Only half of the parish. By the time we got to the seniors, nobody spoke high didn't. Nobody gave a damn. So what we did was we took these incredibly beautiful.

[00:12:59] Wonderful [00:13:00] intuitive children and turn them into complete moron. So our educational systems, you know, we need to let children explore the world on their own. We can't be telling them what to think and what to do. And we certainly shouldn't be deterring them from exercising their passion. When I was, I cut up a map of the world and I put it all there together.

[00:13:20] And I said to the teacher, you know, I think all this was all one big continent, one time, and she's all, that's just stupid. And I, and you know, I was right. It wasn't that I was smarter than her. It was, it just made sense to me at the time. You know, she didn't, you know, she was basically going on what she had been taught.

[00:13:39] I also remember saying as a kid, you know, I think dinosaurs had feathers. I think they were actually birds in many ways. And, you know, I was partially right on that. And again, it made sense to me at the time. And that's what I think that children have the ability to do make sense of the natural world through intuition.

[00:13:55] And we should encourage that.

[00:14:01] [00:14:00] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:14:01] I love that the kids, at least some of them knew the language and, and it is tragic to me that the older kids didn't that they'd forgotten it, that they'd left it behind. And one of the things that I've done in the work that I do with in schools, I I'm known as the earth lady. And I go in and I talk about earth systems science to kids soils, especially, especially when you said worms are, were great.

[00:14:26] Absolutely worms are the soil's best friends. And yet one of the things that I do is I do mentoring programs, but it's not that the seniors mentor the fourth graders, it's the fourth graders who mentor the seniors because they're the ones who have that innate curiosity. And so, so you, as you work with people, as you inspired or by your deeds and your actions, when somebody says to you, what would you have us do.

[00:14:55] W, what would you say

[00:14:58] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:14:58] you have, people have to understand [00:15:00] they can make a difference and how they do that is by harnessing courage and imagination to their passion, and then using their skills and their abilities to make the world a better place. So it doesn't matter really whether that approaches litigation or education or legislation or direct intervention, it doesn't matter.

[00:15:17] It's what you do best and all it all comes together because the strength of an ecosystem is in diversity. The strength of any movement must be in diversity. And it's that diversity that really brings about change.

[00:15:30] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:15:30] Yeah. Different perspectives and different ideas for sure. And people are innovating.

[00:15:35] They're trying for sure. Also, and yet, you know, this last year, so many of us have been in, in the house and trying to, trying to innovate from, from behind the desk because we couldn't go anywhere. And yet you put out this, this new piece called dealing with climate change and stress. And it was this year during, during COVID times.

[00:15:59] Can you [00:16:00] talk a little bit about what you mean by climate stress and what decided you on, on creating this work in 19 2020 when we were all shut down?

[00:16:14] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:16:14] Well, I think that people are you know, undergo are. Experiencing stress because they feel that things like COVID and, and climate change are impossible to deal with.

[00:16:25] And it's difficult to face those realities. And you know, if it goes way back to 1973, I learned a very valuable lesson. I was a volunteer medic for the American Indian movement during the occupation of wounded knee in South Dakota, we were surrounded by 3000 federal agents. They were shooting at us.

[00:16:44] They had killed 40 S they had killed three and wounded 46. And I, I went to Russell means who was the leader of the of the American Indian movement. And I I said, look, we don't have a chance of winning. The odds are against us. It's overwhelming. And he looked at me and he said, well, we're [00:17:00] not concerned about the odds against us, and we're not concerned about winning or losing we're here because this is the right thing to do the right place to do it in the right time to do it.

[00:17:08] Don't worry about the future. Concentrate and focus on the present. What you do in the present will define the future. So that's what the message I try to get across is

focus on what you can do today. And don't worry about, you know, the future, the future will be defined by what you do.

[00:17:28] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:17:28] I love that you said that it's funny. I don't know if you know who he is. Tom Peters, who is a leadership expert. He works with people to help them be leaders. And he, he thinks about sort of help your people first kind of leadership in companies and all of that. And he said the other day, when I interviewed him, he said, excellence is in the next five minutes.

[00:17:48] It's what you do. The very next thing you do, you can be, you can be your very best. And it sounds to me like you two are thinking in a similar vein that it is what you do now, [00:18:00] today that makes all the difference. And tomorrow in some ways will, as you said, B B based on what you do today and, and it hasn't happened yet, so anything could happen.

[00:18:10] And so I guess the next question I have for you, sir, is. Is it too late? Are we at, are we past that point, do you think, or is it just keep your head down and do the work today and whatever happens tomorrow happens tomorrow?

[00:18:27] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:18:27] I certainly don't think it's it's too late. As long as they're alive we can take action.

[00:18:32] We have hope. But again, you have to really accept the humility of who we are. We're part of the whole and related interdependent with all of these other species where they go, we go. And so we have to protect them also. So you know we're, we're just not going to live in a world without, I guess here's the best way to describe it.

[00:18:54] The earth is a spaceship. It's on this incredible voyage around the Milky way, galaxy, it [00:19:00] takes, you know, 250 million years just to make one orbit of the galaxy. It's incredible voyage at incredible speeds. But on this spaceship, there's a life support system. And that provides us with the air we breathe and the food we eat and regulates climate and temperature.

[00:19:15] And that life support system is maintained by a crew, a crew of sentience beans on spaceship earth. We're not part of that crew where the passengers were having a wonderful time amusing ourselves, but we're not maintaining the system. But what we are doing is murdering crew members. We're killing off crew members and there's only so many crew members you can kill before the machinery begins to break down.

[00:19:40] And you know, there's so many trees, you can lose so many fish, you can take out of the ocean before things began to break down. And so we have to, we have to respect the crew. We have to protect the crew and unless we do, then the passengers are going to go down with the ship.

[00:19:58] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:19:58] I've never thought of us as [00:20:00] just the passengers. That makes me a little sad because I would like to think that we could be part of the crew and, and B take an active role in managing those resources, managing what else is going on on the planet with us?

[00:20:14] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:20:14] I mean our only real skill is the ability to manipulate manipulate tools and have a technology in that respect. And so at some time in the future, maybe when the planet is threatened by an incoming asteroid will have the ability to destroy the asteroid and protect everything. But that's about the only functional thing I think that we can do.

[00:20:34] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:20:34] Oh, okay. Well it's interesting because. I remember seeing this temperature mean map when I was at NASA from 18, 1880 to roughly the present and the it's, it's basically the yearly mean temperature of the planet and how much it's gone up in the last 40 years. And so to me, that means that's, that's human change.

[00:20:58] That, that, that means [00:21:00] temperature changes human derived. And so what if we were to be the people who went, wait a minute, we can do something about that. We can curtail our use of fossil fuels. We can start looking at the earth as an actual system. That's the kind of thing that I'm wondering if we started taking as, as again, a global species, not just, oh, this country, that country, this municipality, that municipality, what do you think we could do if we did that?

[00:21:27] Could we make enough of a difference in climate change and avert? The, what I think is the coming climate crisis. For sure. Well, of course

[00:21:35] we

[00:21:35] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:21:35] could, but the problem is, is our species is ecologically insane. We don't have it. We don't have the ability to do that. Just look around the world at world leaders.

[00:21:44] They're incompetent. They have no idea as to what the, the real issues are. What they focus on are trivialities all the time. And that is compounded by the incredible avarice thing, incredible green [00:22:00] of corporations that are supporting and putting those particular politicians into the positions that they're in.

[00:22:05] And how did, how do you stop that? You have to work outside of it. You have to, they have to be movements that are inspired by individuals and groups of individuals. You know, if you look at the history of every social revolution on this planet it was all accomplished by very small groups of people taking action.

[00:22:21] Governments don't change things, you know, slavery wasn't ended by Abraham Lincoln. It was because of the passion of Wilberforce and Douglas and so many other people working and who suffered to get that You know, women's got the women, got the right to vote in this country and other countries, not because of say Woodrow Wilson, he signed the law, but he was a main opponent.

[00:22:41] He opposed them every step of the way, but he gets credit for it. No, the credit goes to all of those women who suffered it or arrested and he died to get that right again. And, you know, you know, movements, don't get the credit for it. Politicians get the credit for it, but it is the movements that make the difference.

[00:23:01] [00:23:00] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:23:01] Hmm. I, I agree with you. And then I see things, how do I put this taking the, the sort of what they call say, same-sex marriage thing here in, in the USA for sure. At one time, just like you were talking about Nelson Mandela at one time, that would, would have ne that would have seemed impossible. And yet now it's the law of the land in this country.

[00:23:27] And some of this was the movement. And yet we watched state after state, after Commonwealth go, yes, people of the same sex can marry and now it's the law, the land. So, so legally those people could be together. But they couldn't be married, but now they can be. And so things, things changed and it's like the movement was there, but public opinion had to go towards it also before the governments of those States went okay.

[00:23:57] Yes, we'll make it, we'll make it a law. [00:24:00] So I keep coming back to in some ways it's a weird thing to say, but in some ways it feels like it's marketing that if we can make people see open people's eyes to the importance of saving Marine wildlife, the importance of averting, the climate disaster, that may be, that will become the law of the land someday too.

[00:24:21] And the question I wonder is how do you feel about that? And also what your thoughts might be on changing those minds and opening them in that direction.

[00:24:30] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:24:30] Well, we can certainly try to change minds, but what will really change minds is the ecological realities. And we're, you know, we're seeing the consequences more and more every year.

[00:24:41] Everything from, you know, this pandemic to weather change, radical changes in weather and and people are dying because of it. And so hopefully, hopefully we'll come to the realization that, you know, we really have to address this and W we either do, or we don't when people say, don't you ever [00:25:00] get depressed?

[00:25:00] I said, well, you know, let's just take a look at the history of of a mass extinction events on this planet. You know, has been by prior, prior to the one that we're in now called the Anthropocene the Permian extinction wiped out 97% of everything in the ocean and 75% of everything on land and the Permian.

[00:25:15] What did all these mass extinction events have in common? Well, 17 to 20 million years it's supple recovery. And so no matter what we do, it'll be a full recovery and 17, 20 million years to the earth. There'll be a nice planet. We just will be here. So this is really not about saving the planet. It's about saving ourselves ourselves.

[00:25:33] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:25:33] I agree completely the earth will be fine for another, what look a few billion years until the sun does what it does at the, at the very end of its life. The planet should be okay. It's, it's the, it's the species who live on the planet that, that will suffer and die out. And that's the thing that I, I, as I said, I, you know, I feel like I I'm parroting you and going, yes, yes, I agree.

[00:25:55] But, but I really do. And, and yet the thing is, [00:26:00] again, even if the planet will be fine, ah, it's so hard to explain this. And this is a concept I've been struggling with

when I go to schools and I talk about this stuff and that is that, like you say, we have COVID and we can look at it and say, people have died and it's a pandemic and it's terrible.

[00:26:19] And yet making the connection to. The earth to climate change to, to habitat degradation. All of that. That's the thing that I'm, that is hard to do that, to attribute it into the appropriate place is a hard thing to do. And I'm wondering what your thoughts are on, on making those connections.

[00:26:42] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:26:42] I think the only way it's going to happen is that we have to let go of, of anthropocentrism we have to embrace biocentrism and because it's anthropocentrism, which has led us to this, that is this understanding that we're all important that we dominate every single religion, every, I mean, dominant religion, [00:27:00] I'm talking about indigenous cultures, but every single dominant religion on this planet holds the position that we're superior, that we're created in the image of some God that we created that were better than everything else that we belong here.

[00:27:13] And nobody else does that. You know, all these they're all anthropocentric perspectives that have to eliminate it. If we're going to be able to buy, because it's a form of insanity. And of course, most people will say, I've been saying for thinking that, but it doesn't, you know, that's but that is the reality.

[00:27:28] It's a form of insanity that we believe that we're better and than anything. Yes. I was speaking at the university of Texas one time and this guy stood up and he said, you know, this is ridiculous. We don't need other species. You know, we got technology, we can survive on our own. And I looked at him. I said, you know, what do I see when I look at you?

[00:27:48] Do I see an individual? Are you an individual? You said, yes, of course. I said, no, you're not, you know, half of your body at least are other animals, you know, thousands of different types of [00:28:00] microbes and viruses and fungi that are circulating around you, you are a student beyond your community of living things.

[00:28:09] And you can't live without them. You need certain viruses. You need certain bacteria in order to survive, manufacture your vitamins, even trim your eyelashes. You know, so, you know, you are a community and you have to understand that what you, your body is. It's the same thing as this whole planet is a community of living things interdependent with each other.

[00:28:31] And we can't live outside of that reality for long.

[00:28:36] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:28:36] I love looking at this sort of as the guy, a principle or the earth is a biosphere. That's how I describe it. It is one, as far as I'm concerned, one, one living, breathing organism is just that the respiration of transpiration happens between plants and animals than being animals, us being part of animals, as far as I'm concerned.

[00:28:56] Well, the thing I'm

[00:28:57] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:28:57] sorry, look at it this way. Also. What is this [00:29:00] planet? What is the planet? We call it the earth, but it is, it's a planet ocean. That

means that it's water in continuous circulation. Sometimes it's in the sea. Sometimes it's locked in ice. Sometimes it's underground. Sometimes it's in the atmosphere and sometimes it's in the cells of every living, plant and animal constantly in circulation.

[00:29:18] The water in your body right now was once in the sea, once in ice, once underground, once locked up and, you know, plant life everywhere. It's okay. It's constantly circulation that just shows you how interdependent everything is because it's the same water flowing through everything. The same water in your body right now was once.

[00:29:36] Pissed by dinosaurs, you know, 16 billion years ago. It's the same water. Water is the lifeblood of the planet. That is what makes all of this possible.

[00:29:46] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:29:46] Absolutely. I, again, I'm, I'm going. Yes, yes, absolutely. I, I agree with you completely. And we look, if we look at the hydrosphere, we can certainly see all of those cycles happening.

[00:29:57] And, and one of the things I do with the kids when I work with [00:30:00] them is we take a drop of rainwater and we follow it through the entire hydrologic cycle and how it will be working its way through plants and animals and all of that. And if we do, if we make that connection, maybe that's the way to do it.

[00:30:14] Maybe, maybe follow a drop of rainwater is the way to go, to see how it all works, because this is one of the things that I think. People aren't thinking about is that the earth is a closed system. Sure. There's the magnetosphere, but, but really it's a closed system. We're not going anywhere. Nothing comes in this is it.

[00:30:33] So if that's the case, if this is a closed system, what are the possibilities for us as far as you know, I mean, yes, we can, we can make sure that, that we use less, we use fewer resources, but what are the possibilities here for us if we, if we recognize that we're living in a closed system?

[00:30:53] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:30:53] Well, I think that our you know, what we could do is just learn to cooperate, not just with each other, but with all other [00:31:00] species on the planet, it's cooperation, which is gonna make the difference.

[00:31:03] And but right now we don't even see these other species, let alone cooperate with them.

[00:31:10] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:31:10] Something you said. A minute ago really ties into what you just said now. And, and that, that notion of, of being told by the dominant religions, that we are the dominant species, which I don't agree with actually on a, on a kind of a silly level.

[00:31:24] But I think the mosquito is dominant to us. They feed off us. But, but having said that there a there's a wonderful scholar named Daniel Hillel. I don't know if you know who he is. He's a soil scientist and a biblical scholar. And he talks, what about that word? That, that, that D word dominion that is in the Bible.

[00:31:42] And he says that it's actually in the original Aramaic, it's not dominion. It's more like caretaker that the word for humans in relationship to our environment was that we were supposed to be caretakers, not have dominion. And I [00:32:00] wonder if we were to look at it from that perspective, what would change?

[00:32:04] What are your thoughts on that?

[00:32:06] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:32:06] Well, I disagree with that. Also, first of all, the word dominion comes from the Latin dominate, but a caretaker that also is saying that, well, you know, we're better than everything else. No, we're not caretakers. We're pardoned. The real character can take caretakers that we want to really look at.

[00:32:22] It is the bacteria and the insects and everything that makes life possible. We CA they, they actually are the dominant life forms on the, on the planet cause can't live without them. But no, we, of course shouldn't live in harmony with all other species and that means belonging. So I I'd rather use the word belonging than as being caretakers.

[00:32:42] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:32:42] And if we do belong. And yet we are, we're sort of like the bully on the block. What, what can, what can I do today short of here I am. I'm speaking with you and hopefully getting the word out to many more thousands of people, about your perspective on things. What is your [00:33:00] advice for someone like me, who I, you know, as I said, I work with kids, what can I be doing differently than what I'm doing now to, to further this cause, well, I think

[00:33:11] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:33:11] you're already doing it.

[00:33:12] I mean, what we have to do is understand what our abilities, what our skills are and harness those abilities and skills to make this a better place. So it, again, it doesn't matter whether your approach is legislation, litigation, education, or direct action doesn't really matter. But you do what you do best.

[00:33:28] And, and also understand that. You can make a difference each and every one of us can make a difference and not to, you just need to feel empowered. You know, many years ago, about 30 years ago, I got a call from a man in Scotland and he said, they're killing gray seals here on the, in the Orkney islands.

[00:33:44] What are you going to do about it? I said, I don't know, I'm on the other side of the planet. You live in Scotland, what are you going to do about it? And he said, well, what, what can I do? I said, well, okay. So we helped to put together a sea shepherd group. He got some volunteers from Scotland. We all went up to the Orkney islands, very [00:34:00] enthusiastic bunch.

[00:34:00] They walked up to the sealers, literally ripped the rifles out of their hands, through the rifles, into the ocean. They all got arrested. We had a wonderful trial. They all got acquitted and everything. And we raised so much money from the publicity that we bought the island, which is now a seal sanctuary all because one guy said, well, what can I do?

[00:34:15] We can each and every one of us can, can make a significant change in the way things are just by simply having the, the passion to proceed and to end to go for it.

[00:34:26] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:34:26] But it takes a shift in perspective too, to, like you said, to empower, to empower yourself that I can make a difference, whatever that difference is.

[00:34:34] And when you, when you started with the family of beavers, you went from there to Greenpeace, to the sea shepherd conservation society. Each thing was an sort of an intuitive leap. I imagine that you went, what else can I do? Or how else can I do it? What inspired you to do that? What inspired you to go the Xi, the sea shepherd conservation society.

[00:34:57] This is what I'm going to do this in many ways. It's going to be my [00:35:00] life's work here I go.

[00:35:01] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:35:01] Well, so learning lessons along the way, like I said, I learned a very valuable lesson from Russell means in the American union movement. What I learned from Greenpeace's that you know, we had a great idea, but what I learned was that protesting was not for me.

[00:35:15] It was too submissive. It's like, please, please, please don't kill the whales. And all we did was hang banners and take pictures. No I needed to intervene. And so I said, see, shepherd up to intervene, but also to do it in a strategic way. So that's why I developed this thing called non aggressive non-violence.

[00:35:32] That is where we're going to be aggressive, but we're not going to hurt anybody. And after 42 years, we've kept true to that. And we've shut down hundreds of hundreds of illegal activities. We're basically an anti-poaching movement. And but you know, we, and I also don't pretend that we're going to save everything by ourselves.

[00:35:47] We're just doing one small part. The real change is going to come from literally millions of people in hundreds of thousands of different groups and organizations addressing the problems overall.

[00:36:00] [00:36:00] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:36:00] And it takes the knowledge that they should or that they can, I guess. And, and that's, that's it's to me, part of. The work that you've done with the writing and the, the films and the documentaries has been about that has been about this, this notion of raising that awareness. So direct action with the sea shepherd, for sure.

[00:36:24] But then also you, you, you have an inspirational part of this, certainly you're, you know, I'm, I'm getting to talk with you and I'm inspired to do more. And so the question is if somebody wants to get involved further with the sea shepherd conservation society and, and sort of put their money where their mouth is, if you will, what's the best way to do that.

[00:36:46] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:36:46] Well, right now we have about 250 volunteers from 25 different countries on a 12 different ships that are around the world. So people can

apply to crew on the ships, or they can be shore supporters and working with any of the sea shepherd chapters [00:37:00] around the world. And that arranges everything from raising funds to support the ships, to cleaning up Marine debris on beaches and doing talks in schools on and on.

[00:37:10] It's quite a diverse sort of, sort of thing, but people can certainly get involved, but also. I have over the years felt that what we do is empower people to go whatever way they wish. Like right now, one of my former captains she's operating her own vessel off of the North coast of Africa vessel that was bought for by the artist banks gate.

[00:37:30] What she's doing is rescuing refugees. That's what she wanted to do. And and we encouraged her to do that and she felt empowered to do so. And that's what she's doing now. And there's so many examples of where our crew have come on board and have gone on and done other things in many other ways, not related to sea shepherd, but all at the same time it's all contributing to the T to change overall.

[00:37:59] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:37:59] It [00:38:00] comes back to I'm sorry, I take, I take a second to sort of take in what you're saying and really ruminate on it because. The power to make that change. It sounds like you believe lies with each individual person and then the direction it will take will be again, up to that individual person as there's a, there's a wonderful quote.

[00:38:27] I don't care what you believe as long as you believe in something. And in some ways that, that seems to hold true here, too. That, that if, if your mind and heart is open, then you can take action in whatever way that will work. However, the thing that I'm concerned about, and this is from someone who works a lot with.

[00:38:45] Inner city. And I come back to students because they're, they are the, they're the kid that I, you know, caretakers belonging of today and tomorrow. And so I, I, I want to know how I can get them while they're young, you know, and get them thinking. And [00:39:00] so, so when I look at and work with inner city kids in urban areas, they don't, they're out of touch with their, the natural world around them.

[00:39:10] I will ask them where where a potato comes from. And they'll say this store, they're not thinking, oh, it's a tuber that grows in the ground. And so I come back to connection. And how, how do we make that connection for people who are not living near sort of expanses of nature?

[00:39:30] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:39:30] Well, that, that of course is is difficult.

[00:39:32] One of my former crew members he passed away, but he was but the thing called the student conservation society many years ago, and he had an amazing program where they go off into the, into the wilderness up in Washington state. And for one week he would have you know, mentally challenged children there and you know, teach them how to make campfires and and camp out and everything.

[00:39:53] But then on the second week, he would bring in kids from the inner city. And of course the first thing that these kids from the inner city [00:40:00] did because they didn't

know any better than it was to make fun of the mentally challenged children. Well, that lasted for about a day until they realized they didn't know how to make a fire.

[00:40:09] And they didn't know how to count a pitch, a tent. And they had to learn from those children. And that really taught them to respect people. And not just based on, you know, what their preconceived notions are, but looking at well, they can do something that I can't do it. And I'm going to learn from them.

[00:40:26] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:40:26] I always love mentoring, especially when it comes from someone either differently abled or younger than you, because boy, can they teach you?

[00:40:33] I often learn more from the students and even then I teach them when I go into schools because their perspectives are from often from that curious place, we just have to unlock it. And then immediately something happens. And I remember this one time going back to worms, the th there were a bunch of kids in the worms gross.

[00:40:54] And then we talked about and explored what the worms do for the soil and [00:41:00] how that soil then grows all the food that will get you, your potatoes that will get you then your French fries. All of a sudden it was, oh, we have to take care of the worms because they're the soil's best friend. And that shift in perspective was everything.

[00:41:15] And so I love it. If you could talk about. If that's, I'm sure it's happened to you because you're, you're helping it happen to me right now. When you see people's eyes open, what, what happens within you? What is the, I don't want to say payoff, but what is, what is the transformation that happens within you when you see someone else transformed?

[00:41:38] Well, you know,

[00:41:38] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:41:38] honestly, I've never really thought about it. You know, it's I'm just doing what I'm doing and a whole, if that inspires other people, then, then that's nice. And it makes for a better world, but also I, you know, I'm learning from other people too. And you know, learning all the time, especially from young people you know, I learned an awful lot.

[00:41:55] So it's, it's really an interchange of ideas and perspectives and [00:42:00] sharing the experiences.

[00:42:04] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:42:04] Yeah. It's, you know? Yes. Again, I I'm I'm I'm your yes. Woman from now on everything you say. Yes. Yes. I agree. So, but let me ask you about something that is, that is that isn't so happy, happy, joy, joy. They call you an eco pirate and I wonder what that actually means from your perspective.

[00:42:28] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:42:28] Well, back in the nineties, our, our opposition made the poachers and a hostile governments who were supporting the poachers decided to call us pirates.

[00:42:37] I said, oh, well, you know, I was a student of Akido, which is where, when a force comes at you, you use it to your advantage. I said, what are we going to call us pirates? Yeah. Well then we'll, we'll be pirates. And so we just, I signed her own jolly, Roger, you know, and it has, it's a very symbolic, but you know, here's the thing about pirates.

[00:42:53] They get things done and they cut through all of the, the bureaucracy. But, you know, we [00:43:00] also have a misconception of what were the pirates. Yeah. There's a great series on Netflix right now, which I think really illustrates this on the, you know, the age of, of of the pirates. We tend to think of them as a bunch of really hooligans killers and and that, but they were way ahead of their time.

[00:43:16] In the 17th century, those ships were run democratically. They elected their governments. They accepted people regardless of what their race or their gender was. There were female pirates, they were Africans pirates. They, you know, when black beard used to. Attack slave ships. And he would take the, he wanted the ships and he would free the slaves and he would give them an, a child choice.

[00:43:38] You can go shore, be free, or you can you can join my crew and rise to the level of your confidence on that. His Lieutenant was was African you know, and people say, well, they come down to while they were a bunch of thieves. Yes. They stole gold from the Spaniards. And where did the Spanish get back gold?

[00:43:53] They stole it from the, from the Incas and the Aztecs in that. So are you really a thief if you steal gold from themes? I don't know, [00:44:00] but in a world, in a world where a 10 year old boy could be hung for stealing a loaf of bread in London, it wasn't a far stretch to take the risks to be a real pirate.

[00:44:09] You know, when Anne Bonnie was asked about she was said that there was a death penalty for piracy, and she said, well, thank God for it too. If it wasn't for that, every, every, every joker would be doing this job.

[00:44:21] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:44:21] I love it. I love it. You know, this, this notion of we, we tend to romanticize pirates, but I love, I love that you have, it's a wonderful it's a wonderful way of looking at piracy because we don't tend to think of pirates as, as a positive force.

[00:44:38] And because what's, mine is mine. What's yours is yours is sort of the, the law of the land. But if we look at it as an interdependence process, then we are going to start looking at things quite differently. I do want to touch on something you just said, though, you're an I Quito student. What style do you

[00:44:55] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:44:55] study?

[00:44:56] Oh, that was many years ago when I was very, very young. [00:45:00] So I, you know I can't really recall all of that, but I, I D I do remember the basic lessons, which are, you know, is to use. That force, which is being used against you for you. And that's what I remember most,

[00:45:16] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:45:16] I I'm a S I'm a black belt in I Quito.

[00:45:18] That's why I was like, Oh, that'd be cool if we studied the same style. Yeah. I love that notion of harmonizing with your opponent and the way my sensei puts it is you go with them where they're going and then help them go just a little bit further. And that's, and that's Akido. So, okay,

[00:45:36] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:45:36] well, but I also studied China move Kwan, which was interesting because they don't have belts in jungle quad.

[00:45:43] In fact, they do. They give you a black belt when you start and said, we don't want to hear any more about belts. You got your black belt now and start learning.

[00:45:50] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:45:50] I loved, I loved it when my sensei said, Oh, you've gotten your black belt. Now you've earned the right to begin studying. It was like, Oh, well only five years later.

[00:46:00] [00:45:59] Great. So it took, it took a while for me to earn the right to be a student at first, the first, those first few years are just practicing to be ready. So there, there are so many other things, but I know you have a life to get back to. I would love to chat with you real quickly about it's a Netflix special.

[00:46:19] That's going to be premiering on March 24th. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about what that is.

[00:46:25] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:46:25] A few years ago Kip Anderson did a film called Cowspiracy, which was to really expose you know, all of the problems with the meat industry. And he is now producing this film called , which sea shepherd is co-producing and that's directed by Allie Tabrizi.

[00:46:40] And what it is is to show overall globally, the destruction caused by Marine to Marine ecosystems from industrialized fishing and by poaching, but also industrialized fishing, and really to make people aware of just things that they're just not aware of for the fact that, you know, a good 20%, all of the fish taken out of the [00:47:00] ocean isn't even eaten by people.

[00:47:01] It's sped to chickens and to pigs and to domestic salmon. So we live in a world where chickens are eating more fish than all the world's puffins and albatrosses put together. And it's just showing the, the diminishment the Vera, the escalating diminishment of fish species after specific fish species up over the last 40, 50 years.

[00:47:21] And what that means if, if the fish disappear, the ocean collapses and if the ocean collapses and dies, we die with it. So it's very important that we deal with that right now, this four and a half million fishing vessels out on the ocean setting lines and drift nets and nets so much that it could go around the world numerous times.

[00:47:38] And to give you an idea at night, 2015, we intercepted a toothfish poacher in the Southern ocean. It was the longest pursuit of a poacher in maritime history. We chase that vessel from the coast of Antarctica to equatorial West Africa, 110 days suit. We had two

shifts involved. The Bob Barker did the pursuit and the Sam Simon came in and [00:48:00] its job was to recover the net that the the thunder, the, the toothpaste poacher dropped, it took 110 hours to recover that net.

[00:48:07] It was 72 kilometers long and weighed 70 tons. And that was just one ship. So it just shows you the, the scale of it. These are weapons of mass ecological destruction that are being set each and every day. And you know, they talk about sustainable seafood. There's no such thing. There is no sustainable seafood.

[00:48:25] Even the word sustainable that was coined by gro Harlem. Brundtland the prime minister of Norway in 1972 environmental conference. And what does it mean? It means business as usual. But this was the name we're going to use. Call it sustainable, everything. There is no sustainable fisheries.

[00:48:43] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:48:43] And again, your new number one fan goes, I agree. And you make me very happy. I'm vegan. So when, when this, this premier, what is the message that you hope people will take away from watching it?

[00:48:59] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:48:59] Well, hopefully [00:49:00] people will stop eating fish. And also I should point your vegan. Our vessels have been vegan since 1999 and vegetarian since 1979, you don't have to join our crew, but you have to be vegan while you're on the crew.

[00:49:14] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:49:14] I love it. I don't think I can join your crew, but I love that. That, that is the case. I, yeah, I went vegetarian in 1987 and vegan in 2003. And it's funny how many people ask me? So you eating meat yet? Are you going to go back? No, of course not. This is, this is my life and, and yet. It's, it's, it's strange to people.

[00:49:35] It's strange to people that that is a choice that I would make. And there are, there are the same sort of old tired arguments. Oh, we're omnivores, blah, blah, blah. And I think it's about choices. And so I choose this, right? So, so when we choose a course of action in many ways it's empowering. And if you are talking to someone who disagrees with, with your [00:50:00] stance, with your viewpoint, What is your response to someone who goes well, we're omnivores or, well, this is part of the way we do things.

[00:50:08] What is your response to someone like that?

[00:50:11] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:50:11] When there was only 200,000 people in the whole entire planet, but there isn't room for 8 billion meat, eating fish, eating primates, it's just art. It's an unnatural situation. We killed 65 billion animals alone. That's not talking about the fish. 65 billion animals a year, every year are slaughtered.

[00:50:28] And that is the single greatest contributor to greenhouse gases, the single greatest contributor to groundwater pollution and the single greatest contributor to dead zones in the ocean. This is an ecological crime of incredible proportions. And if you're going, if people choose to be participants in that crime, then that's what they are participants.

[00:50:46] They're there. They're contributing to the destruction of life on this planet and they're, and they're also contributing to our own extinction.

[00:50:56] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:50:56] That says it right there. I, again, I agree [00:51:00] completely. And it's, it's a tough, it's a tough place to stand. I think because you know, your history will show that you're right.

[00:51:13] And yet in the moment perspective is hard. It's kind of like the difference between talking to someone about the difference between weather and climate. And you can say, Oh, there's a hurricane for these few days. But thinking about it sort of climate to logically it's, it's this many hurricanes, this severe are being caused by the climate crisis.

[00:51:36] And that's a long-term view. And I, I wonder sometimes if our species has the capability, honestly, of thinking truly long-term in order to make these changes be lasting ones. What are your thoughts on that? Well, we

[00:51:51] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:51:51] also have the complication of absolutely insane thinking. Like these hurricanes and floods are being caused by gay marriage.

[00:51:56] You know, it's really hard to, to, to argue with people who have that [00:52:00] mindset. I mean, what are you saying in that? But they've diluted themselves. I call it collective mass psychosis and you know, this is what which is one of the main problems in the world is this you know, enslavement to these philosophies, which just make no sense ecologically or, or any, anything else.

[00:52:18] They're just, they're just insane.

[00:52:22] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:52:22] Yeah. And then I, again, because I, because I ended up talking to teachers and school administrators, a lot about the show, the presentation I'm going to do for kids, that's something that I'm constantly in that space of having to talk about that this notion is no climate is long-term when we have to think about it.

[00:52:43] Long-term and the other question, and I only have just a couple more, I promise. The other question that I wonder about is critical thinking is this notion that we can evaluate and assess something, objective and look at the facts and make our decisions based on those facts. I mean, you, you're [00:53:00] a wealth of knowledge and yet what you're calling upon people to do, and correct me if I'm wrong is to think critically is to go.

[00:53:08] I'm going to look at this dispassionately and see if I can change. Something about the way I'm doing things or the way I'm thinking based on years, decades of one of a different way of thinking. So when, when you meet that, when you meet that resistance, what is your go-to response? What do you say? What do you do?

[00:53:31] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:53:31] Well, it is difficult. I have few, you know, years ago I was an instructor at UCLA. I had a course on honors course on science technology and ethics for the 21st century. And you know, one of the students asked me to explain what the concept of double think, meaning believing in two opposing ideas at the same time.

[00:53:50] And I said, okay, well, how many people in this class are Christians? Think six people put up their hands. I said, how many gods are there? This well, there's only one God. I said, really? [00:54:00] Who's thinking, you know, it's an omnipotent power strong. It's so strong that even this God can't do it and deal with it.

[00:54:08] It's a God. And what are all these angels? You guys can have more gods and all the Hindus do. And yet believe in only one God, how can you believe in one God? And yet believe in thousands of been mortal beings who are technically gods. And I said, there's no difference between this and believing in Zeus and the family of gods that comes with it.

[00:54:28] I mean, so this is the concept of double thing that you can think these two opposing ideas, because you've got this locked into your brain, that this is a reality. When in fact it's really just a delusion, you know, we think are so intelligent, but we're not. I, you know, I was arguing with a a Whaler one time and he says, but Watson, you say the wheels are more intelligent than people.

[00:54:47] This is a really, really stupid thing to say, how can you be so stupid? And I said, well, you know, George, I believe that intelligence is the ability to live in harmony with the natural world. And by that criteria, whales are far more intelligent [00:55:00] than we are. He said, well, by that criteria, cockroaches are more intelligent than we are.

[00:55:03] I said, George, you're beginning to understand what I'm trying to tell you.

[00:55:06] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:55:06] There you go. You've got it. I love it. I'm going to use that. I'm going to totally steal it and use it. That's fantastic. Captain Watson, I'm so grateful that you were able to take the time to, to talk with me today. I have just one last question and it is, it's kind of a silly question, but I find that it yields some poignant answers.

[00:55:28] And the question is this. If you had a plane that could sky write anything for the whole world to see, what would you say?

[00:55:39] **Captain Paul Watson:** [00:55:39] Well, you know, the, the one thing that I, I, I say all the time and it's actually a quote that's associated with music, the ocean dies. We all die.

[00:55:51] **Izolda Trakhtenberg:** [00:55:51] Yeah. That that's, that's an, that's a truth. That's an objective truth. I think that's, that's it again. Thank you. [00:56:00] Thank you so much for being on the show. Katherine Watson, you, you have no idea how much I've enjoyed this conversation. It's been just a pleasure and an honor. Well, thank you very much. I'm so thrilled.

[00:56:13] Y'all I have to say that this is his old attract Nunberg for the innovative mindset podcast. So grateful that captain Paul Watson was able to take the time to chat with me today. If you enjoyed this, let me know. I'd love to hear about it and go join the sea shepherd conservation society. Go see what you can do to get involved so that we can all save the planet, save ourselves.

[00:56:35] And as captain Watson says, actually the planet will be fine. It's all about let's be selfish. Let's save ourselves dog gone it. And until next time, I hope you enjoy the innovative

mindset podcast. This is Izolda Trakhtenberg, reminding you to listen, learn, laugh, and love a whole lot.

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