

Paul Watson: Shining Activist Hero or Psychopathic Terrorist?

Posted by James Marshall Black on May 22, 2012 in Blog

Important Note: This is an opinion article written in the Blog section of The Costa Rica Star, by writer James Marshall Black, PhD. Leave your comments below.

[Paul Watson](#) has always been known as a “stand up” kind of guy who prefers direct action over words. For him, the end has always justified the means, with the result that he is adored by most and considered despicable by [many](#). Fewer persons take the middle ground. There is much to admire about him, and much to criticize. Probably the best way to describe him would be as “controversial”.



He claims to be a [founder](#) of Greenpeace in 1972, but Greenpeace denies this, saying only that he was an “influential early member”. True, he was very active from the beginning in Greenpeace, but in 1977 was firmly booted out because of his aggressive behavior and violent beliefs in protecting animals.

Before Greenpeace, he worked with considerable success in saving the trees of Oregon with [Earth First](#), and in the process made a name for himself for using tree spikes. [Spiking a tree](#) consists of finding the best spot to begin cutting it down, and then embedding a metal spike, bar, nail, or piece of ceramic that would pose a real danger to anyone later trying to fell the tree with a chainsaw.

After being kicked out of [Greenpeace](#), as “Captain” Paul Watson he immediately formed the [Sea Shepherd Conservation Society](#) (SSCS) even though it seems he was never licensed in any country as a ship captain. Not one to beat around the bush, the organization’s mission was closely defined as “a self appointed -policing organization given credibility by the terms of the United Nations Earth Charter.” In other words, to stop all fishing of which it disapproves, and with the force and means necessary to accomplish this.

“The fact is that we live in an extremely violent culture, and we all justify violence if it’s for what we believe in.” — Paul Watson, speaking at the [Animal Rights 2002 convention](#).

He then acquired his first vessel, the [Sea Shepherd](#), and fit her out with a heavily reinforced bow for ramming and an attachment dubbed the “letter opener” – a special bow structure to enable slicing through the hulls other ships. Then he enlisted a crew of animal rights activists who showed their dedication by paying him for the privilege of [swashbuckling](#) pirate adventure on the high seas in a black ship flying the Skull and Bones.

In 1979, the Sea Shepherd rammed the seal hunting [Sierra](#) but did not sink her. But in 1980, they did, and an investigation revealed that limpet mines had been used. The next [headlines](#) (PDF download) Watson made were for threatening to murder two members of the [Canadian government](#) for voting against a moratorium on sperm whales at the [International Whaling Commission](#) annual meeting.

In 1981, he claimed responsibility for the sinking of two whaling vessels, [Ibsa I](#) and [Ibsa II](#), in the Spanish harbor

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