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To help turn the tides on whaling, photographer Lincoln Shaw goes to sea

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"Humanity cannot survive without healthy oceans," Lincoln Shaw said to his Tuesday night audience in Pacifica.

In late 2009 and the early part of 2010, Shaw spent 81 days on the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS) vessel "Bob Barker." The purpose of the expedition was to disrupt a Japanese whaling fleet in Antarctica. It was an extraordinary journey and it was successful - though it came at a cost.

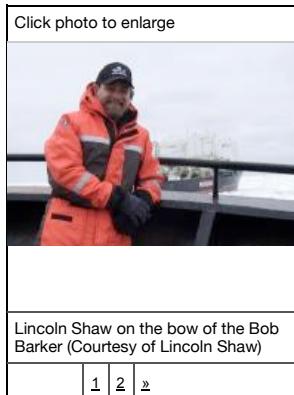
Shaw describes himself as one of the "thousands of Sea Shepherd volunteers around the world who are trying to help humanity not destroy the planet's oceans."

As such Shaw volunteered as a photographer and a crew member on a journey that was equal parts beauty and danger. Shaw's photographs chronicled the voyage and now he continues his "Sea Shepherd" volunteerism by presenting slides and narrative to any audience who will have him.

Shaw met Pacifican Lynn Adams, president of the Pacifica Beach Coalition, at a presentation in San Francisco. Subsequently Shaw was brought as a speaker to the Sharp Park Library by the Pacifica Beach Coalition and the Pedro Point Surf Club. The event was free, the room was packed and Shaw's first-person account was riveting and urgent.

This was not Shaw's first sail on a Sea Shepherd vessel. The first sail was prompted after Shaw read a book by Canadian Paul Franklin Watson in November of '04. Captain Watson is a co-founding director of the Greenpeace Foundation and he serves as founder and president of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society.

Established in 1977, SSCS (www.seashepherd.org) is an international non-profit, marine wildlife conservation organization whose mission is to end the destruction of habitat and slaughter of wildlife in the world's oceans in order to conserve and protect ecosystems and species. They use "innovative direct-action tactics to investigate, document, and take action when necessary to expose and confront illegal activities on the high seas." Their goal is to protect whales, seals, dolphins, sharks and other marine life - to safeguard the biodiversity of our delicately-balanced ocean ecosystems and as



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such, preserve the planet for all generations.

While SSCS has reportedly prevented more than 1,400 whales from being slaughtered over the past four hunting seasons, their direct action-tactics against "whale" processing vessels have earned them international praise and some international outrage with at least one government labeling them a "terrorist" organization. From the stock of their non-violent arsenal, SSCS crews have been known to stink up whaling vessels with benign stink bombs derived from rancid butter, or, spray the whaler's deck with methyl cellulose, a slippery powder that impedes business. They have also been known to fire powerful water canons.

Captain Watson has been at the helm of over 225-ocean going expeditions and in print alone, he is an inspirational page turner. But for Lincoln Shaw it was not enough to read about Watson. So in 2005, Shaw stepped away from the demands of his own life and for three months, volunteered as a member of the Captain's international crew that set sail for Australia.

Shaw, who lives in San Francisco, has spent most of his adult life selling consumer electronics to retailers. He also volunteers at the Sausalito-based Marine Mammal Center (www.marinemammalcenter.org (<http://www.marinemammalcenter.org>)), a nonprofit veterinary research hospital and educational center dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of ill and injured marine mammals.

For Shaw, the 2005 ride with the Captain and his crew was powerful and life changing. Still, three months to sea with no paycheck and little connection to the threads of one's everyday life make such a commitment a thoughtful one. It was late 2009 before Shaw was in a position to sail again and this time, he had something new to consider. This time a crew from Animal Planet Network's reality show "Whale Wars" would also be on board and Shaw and other crew members aboard the three Sea Shepherd vessels - the Bob Barker, the Steve Irwin and the Ady Gil - would confront the Japanese whaling fleet in the Antarctic whaling sanctuary with cameras rolling. (The current season of "Whale Wars" features these driven days.) Crewman Shaw was on board the Bob Barker. The Bob Barker is a long-range fast ice vessel of 1,200 long tons, built in Norway in 1950 and bought by SSCS and refitted with a \$5 million donation from the television game show host of the same name. The Steve Irwin, named in honor of the late Crocodile Hunter, is a 195-foot ship built in 1975 as a Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency conservation enforcement patrol boat. The third ship, the Ady Gil, was a futuristic looking trimaran which set the world record for global circumnavigation at 50 knots. It was built to intercept and physically block the harpoon ships.

Shaw described traveling through the waters of the Antarctic as, "Surreal and inspiring. The Antarctic is a place where humans simply shouldn't be and I am honored to have been one of the crew selected to help protect the whales." (To be a crew member, volunteer or not, is a selection process.) There were violent storms in the Southern Ocean and Shaw saw swells reach as high as 50 feet and felt winds racing by at 50 to 60 mph. He was also on board when the Japanese whaling fleet vessel, the "Yushin Maru 3" rammed the "Bob Barker" which penetrated the Sea Shepherd vessel's hull. (No SSCS crew was injured during the collision and the ship received no operating damage. The Yushin Maru 3 however was damaged.) Why the ram? The Bob Barker had been preventing the slaughtering of whales by actively blocking the slipway of the "Nisshin Maru," the Japanese whaling fleet's factory ship.

Those events took place after the Japanese ship "Shonan Maru Number 2" rammed the much smaller Ady Gil, lopping off the Gil's bow and destroying the vessel.

Miraculously, no lives were lost, however, the Gil's outraged captain, Captain Peter Bethune, later boarded the Japanese whaling ship in an attempt to make a citizen's arrest of its captain and he in turn was arrested and sent to Japan in custody. Bethune could have received up to 15 years in prison, but the judge handed down a two-year prison sentence, suspended for five years.

Have things become more dangerous for Captain Watson and the crews of the Sea Shepherd since the aftermath of Captain Bethune boarding the Shonan Maru?

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"The whalers refused to be involved in the international inquiry after they ran over and sank the Ady Gil," Shaw said. "When the government in Japan supported this, the other countries involved caved, which tells the whalers they can pretty much do what they want with complete immunity from prosecution. This has created a very dangerous environment. Sea Shepherd has never hurt

anyone on any campaign and is proud to be a nonviolent direct action group." "If the governments of the world would simply uphold all the laws and agreements they've already made, Sea Shepherd would never return to the Southern Ocean because we wouldn't be needed," Shaw continued.

"If we can't save the whales, what chance do we have to save the other ocean-going creatures or the ocean itself, let alone the planet? For me, this is a line in the sand and I'm willing to put my life behind it." To invite Lincoln Shaw to come speak to your assembly he can be contacted through Facebook. No brutal images are shown during the presentation.

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