

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – DECEMBER 31, 2010**

**To interview Captain Paul Watson onboard the *Steve Irwin*: 1-954-672-3230 (US #)**

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### **Sea Shepherd Hunts Down the Japanese Whalers Before a Single Whale is Killed**

**The Southern Ocean - 148 degrees west 63 degrees south - Sea Shepherd Conservation Society's** fleet has found the illegal Japanese whaling vessels on the last day of the year. In the vastness of the Southern Ocean, Sea Shepherd's ships were able to find the Japanese fleet before they had the chance to begin killing whales. This is a momentous victory for the whales and precisely how Sea Shepherd's **President and Founder Captain Paul Watson** had hoped to ring in the New Year.

At around 0900 hours (Australian Eastern Standard Time), Sea Shepherd's ship the **Bob Barker** found a harpoon vessel on the edge of the ice at 148 degrees west. The unidentified Japanese vessel attempted to move south to draw the *Bob Barker* away from the ***Nisshin Maru***.

At 1500 Hours AEST, some 60 miles to the north, Sea Shepherd's flagship vessel the ***Steve Irwin*** found the Japanese harpoon vessel ***Yushin Maru #2*** sitting in the ice.

The ***Gojira*** and Sea Shepherd's helicopter the ***Nancy Burnet*** continue to search for the ***Nisshin Maru***, Japan's floating abattoir.

#### **The art of Finding the Whalers**

By knowing when the *Nisshin Maru* left Japan and estimating the speed of the ship as it headed south, Captain Watson was able to get a rough idea of the whaling fleet's daily progress. He decided to take the *Steve Irwin* to Wellington, New Zealand and then down to Bluff on the southern end of the South Island. The *Gojira* stayed in Hobart and the *Bob Barker* moved to the middle and then to the south of the Tasman Sea to show the Japanese whalers that we were covering their path should they choose to go through it. Captain Watson figured this would force the whaling fleet to the east to avoid being caught in the middle of the Sea Shepherd fleet in the Tasman Sea.

At the beginning of this year's hunting season, the whalers made an announcement that they would be expanding their hunting area to make it more difficult for Sea Shepherd to find them, but over the last seven campaigns that Sea Shepherd has been harassing them, the illegal Japanese whalers have proven themselves to be nothing short of predictable...and Captain Watson called their bluff.

When the Tasmanian patrol reported the whalers well to the northeast of New Zealand heading southeast, Captain Watson deduced that they would head for the extreme eastern boundary of the area Japan has designated for their so-called research, an area that extends to 145 degrees west. This would place them at the maximum distance from where the Sea Shepherd ships departed from Tasmania and New Zealand.

Captain Watson instructed Captain Locky MacLean to take the *Gojira* east along the 60-degree line of latitude. Captain Alex Cornelissen of the *Bob Barker* was instructed to head east along the 64-degree line of latitude, while Captain Watson took the *Steve Irwin* east along the 62-degree line of latitude.

The two harpoon ships were spotted at 148 degrees west of the line of longitude on December 31<sup>st</sup>. The interception of the Japanese whaling fleet took place 1,700 nautical miles southeast of New Zealand and 2,300 nautical miles southwest of Chile.

"This is fantastic," said *Steve Irwin's* Chief Cook Laura Dakin of Canberra, Australia, "for the first time in Sea Shepherd's history, we have located the whalers before they even had a chance to kill a single whale."

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#### **About Sea Shepherd Conservation Society**

*Established in 1977, Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS) is an international non-profit 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. Sea Shepherd uses innovative direct-action tactics to investigate, document, and take action when necessary to expose and confront illegal activities on the high seas. By safeguarding the biodiversity of our delicately-balanced oceanic ecosystems, Sea Shepherd works to ensure their survival for future generations. Founder and President Captain Paul Watson, is a world renowned, respected leader in environmental issues. Visit [www.seashepherd.org](http://www.seashepherd.org) for more information.*