

## SHAKESPEARE'S STEADFAST FOOTSTEPS IN THE SEA: SEA CHANGE AND SEA SHEPHERD'S CONSERVATION

### EFFORTS



Sea Shepherd was established in 1977 by Captain Paul Watson and “aims to end the destruction of habitat and slaughter of wildlife in the world’s oceans in order to conserve and protect ecosystems and species.” As a branch of Greenpeace, Sea Shepherd aims to enforce the United Nations mandate on the World Charter for Nature, and strives to promote the preservation of biodiversity through education, the building of infrastructure, and strengthening agreements focused on environmental protection.

**“Sea Shepherd’s work can often be dangerous; as an NGO, it is often criminalized abroad. In some countries, illegal fishing or whale hunting is sanctioned by state and military. Sea Shepherd is also about addressing injustices.”**

– Cora Schnelle, Berlin-based volunteer

Operation Galapagos aims to protect the region’s critically vulnerable island habitat, described as “the most sacred ecosystem on the planet.” Recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1978, Galápagos was declared the second largest marine reserve in the world in 1986, smaller only than Australia’s Great Barrier Reef.



To combat a host of environmental issues from alien or invasive species to pollution and climate change, Sea Shepherd:

- Provides support in the form of tools and equipment to relevant public institutions.
- Leads education efforts in the area.
- Maintains and strengthens specific environmental protection agreements and cooperation agreements.
- Assists, from the civil society, to the diffusion, impulse and effective exercise of environmental rights and nature rights in the Galápagos.

Shakespeare touches on the mythology of the timeless ocean that presumes inexhaustible oceanic spaces untouched by human activity. Man is incapable of controlling or influencing the seas (even Prospero the magician has to go through Ariel) - but there is an interconnectedness between humans, oceans and marine life.

Shakespeare’s characters are often at the mercy of a tempestuous sea, which he uses allegorically to comment on the nature of man, and there are many plays that feature sea-crossings.

The state of the sea (often tempestuous) reflects human crisis in Shakespeare. Nature in Shakespearean plays is often the site of change and transformation, and sea frequently serves as such a medium for change.



**This island’s mine, by Sycorax my mother,  
Which thou tak’st from me. When thou  
cam’st first,  
Thou strok’st me and mad’st much of me,  
wouldst give me  
Water with berries in ’t, and teach me  
how  
To name the bigger light and how the less,  
That burn by day and night.**  
–Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (Caliban)

To avoid paternalistic, neo-colonial and western-centric impositions in their work with Galápagos, Sea Shepherd’s approach focuses on cooperation and support, instead of direct-action tactics employed in some of their other projects. International, inter-agency cooperation is greatly emphasised in their work with Ecuadorian authorities. The dependency of local fishermen on the sea is acknowledged, and Sea Shepherd aims to integrate them into local efforts to protect wildlife instead of assuming direct authority.

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**“Studying how someone such as Shakespeare connects with the present environmental crises that we daily breathe and smell and eat and taste, the difficulties and tragedies we live through and cause, does several things. It forces us to imagine the literature and the theory through new perspectives, to examine complementary systems of thought, and to develop a vocabulary for concepts that have no names. It also allows us to define more fully the goals, methodologies, and terms of ecocriticism.”**

–Simon Estok, *An Introduction to Shakespeare and Ecocriticism: The Special Cluster*