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You’re listening to Boat Radio. I’m Mike McDowall. This week, attempting to educate people about ocean conservation does not work and the money should be spent instead on ad campaigns aimed at changing attitudes. That’s just one of the controversial views aired by Dr. Stefan Harzen of The Palm Beach Dolphin Project when he sat down with Sarah O’Kelly for a fascinating interview about boaters’ favorite mammals. That is a little later in the program.

Before that, I want to talk about boat rental. It should be an easy process, but often it is not. Often, it’s a hassle. There’s no ocean Hurts or Avis on the water offering a variety of similar boats under one license. Boats tend to be rented by small operators. Sometimes, depending on which country you’re in, you won’t know what license is required until your dock side. Now, you would think, or I would think that modern technology has long offered a solution. You would think also that because boat owners rarely use their vessels every day, even every week, that it should be simplicity itself to organize a means of renting out all of those boats that sit idle. Well, my guest today thinks so too.

Adrian Walker is the founder and co-owner of BoatAffair, a company that matches available privately-owned boats with renters who are eager to get out on the water.  
  
**Mike McDowall**: Adrian, welcome to Boat Radio.

**Adrian Walker**: Mike, good morning. It’s a pleasure. Thank you so much for having me on the program.

**Mike McDowall**: It’s a pleasure. Let’s learn a little bit about you, first, before we get on to the company. When did you first start driving boats?

**Adrian Walker**: I started driving boats when I was 18. Almost 20 years ago. I remember that was on a summer holiday in South of France. Me and my father, we had a chat about motorboats. We decided to do the boat license there and then so at the age of 18, I did my boat license. That’s when I started driving boats, very early on in my life.

**Mike McDowall**: When did you become a boat owner?

**Adrian Walker**: My first motorboat, we bought seven years ago, also in South of France. That’s also on a summer holiday. We got talking about owning versus renting. We decided, why don’t we try out to be boat owners. We bought a small, little motorboat. That was seven years ago.

**Mike McDowall**: You were on holiday. While you were on holiday, you bought a boat.

**Adrian Walker**: That is very true.

**Mike McDowall**: How did you get it home?

**Adrian Walker**: Well, we didn’t. That’s the thing. That’s where my pain points became apparent and materialized. We have a small house in the South of France. I knew I would always come back here every summer for a week or two. I thought—back in the day, I thought that was a good idea to have a boat here so whenever I come back after that, I could use this boat. It turned out that I wasn’t really happy about that solution at all, as you can imagine.

**Mike McDowall**: Yeah. You owned a boat, which you could only use when you were on holiday in a different country.

**Adrian Walker**: That is absolutely correct.

**Mike McDowall**: Not the ideal spot to keep your boat.

**Adrian Walker**: Well, it’s not the ideal solution, absolutely. I know other boat owners. I’ve got many friends who are boat owners. They told me that they don’t think the problem is the fact that I’ve got it in South of France and I live in Switzerland. They believe that they’ve got similar issues even though their boat is in Switzerland and they live in Switzerland, as well. Just like me, they won’t take the boat out more than eight times a year. Ten times if you’re lucky. We all share the same pain points. In my case, it’s just a little bit more difficult to take it out because I’ve got 800 kilometers between Switzerland and France. Essentially, yeah. There’s a pain point there.

**Mike McDowall**: Now, you live in Switzerland?

**Adrian Walker**: Yeah. I grew up in Switzerland. Most of my life I lived there.

**Mike McDowall**: Because you have a very English name, Adrian Walker. It’s very British sounding name.

**Adrian Walker**: Yes.

**Mike McDowall**: What’s your background?

**Adrian Walker**: My father is from London. He grew up in London. He met my mother, who’s from Switzerland. He met my mother in London 40 years ago. Together, they decided to move to Switzerland. They stayed there ever since. My father, being English, he’s lived in Switzerland for 40 years now. I’m 50/50. Half English, half Swiss.

**Mike McDowall**: Switzerland has no coastline. Do you do any boating in Switzerland on the amazing lakes and inland waterways?

**Adrian Walker**: Yes, thank you. We do have amazing lakes. I will admit that we miss the sea and the beaches. We miss that dearly in Switzerland. However, we’ve got wonderful lakes. The Lake of Zurich. We’ve got the Lake of Geneva to the west. So yes, quite a bit of boats around the boat lakes. The problem, however, is that this summer we lost about two months in Switzerland, June, July, and August. If you’re lucky two to three months. You see what I’m getting at here.

**Mike McDowall**: Yeah. Switzerland is somewhere you would associate with cold weather, isn’t it? And, cold weather sports, skiing, and tobogganing.

**Adrian Walker**: We love to go skiing in the winter, absolutely.

**Mike McDowall**: You have a son, Alex. He’s even more of a mix than you are because your wife—you’re newly married, actually. Your wife, Natalia, she is Ukrainian.

**Adrian Walker**: Natalia and I, we got married two months ago. She moved to England at the age of thirteen from Ukraine. She’s English now. She speaks English. She speaks Russian. My son, he’s actually tri-lingual now. At home, we speak a lot of English. In kindergarten, Alex, my son, he would switch into Swiss-German. Sometimes, he’ll speak Russian with Natalia. So yeah, he speaks three languages fluently.

**Mike McDowall**: It’s a gift, isn’t it because I now live in Majorca. The language of Majorca, people think it’s Spanish, but it’s not. It’s Catalan. My daughter is at school here. She’s schooled in Catalan and in Spanish, but we speak in English. She’s also tri-lingual. It’s an amazing gift we’ve given these kids. Now, Natalia is a sailor.

**Adrian Walker**: She used to do a lot of sailing when she was younger. She’s now looking into acquiring or doing the motorboat license, as well. Yes, she shares the passion. She’s more of the sailor. I’m more of the motorboat driver.

**Mike McDowall**: Let’s talk about BoatAffair then. We already know where the idea came from. You only use your South of France motorboat 8 or 10 times a year.

**Adrian Walker**: Yes.

**Mike McDowall**: The rest of the year—pointless thing.

**Adrian Walker**: Yes.

**Mike McDowall**: No, it’s not at all. It seems it’s a lot of money isn’t it, to spend. You’re keeping a boat for just essentially a week or a week and a half use, every year. That’s what sowed the seed in your head for BoatAffair?

**Adrian Walker**: We are really solving our own problem. A year ago, we were sitting on our motorboat. As per usual, I started to complain a little. I was saying to Natalia, “Look, this is such a shame. This is such a beautiful motorboat. It costs us a significant amount of money. We only use it 5, 7, 10 times a year if we’re lucky.” It’s also bad for the boat. It’s bad for the engine. It’s not being properly used. We started brainstorming. We’re saying, “You know what?” Natalia said. “If we could rent out this boat through a trusted process, not only would we get to know more people, not only could we share our boating experience, but we could also make some money back and the boat will be used. That’s how we started discussing the issue a year ago in the South of France. That’s how BoatAffair came to life.

**Mike McDowall**: It’s basically, it’s a dating agency.

**Adrian Walker**: Yes.

**Mike McDowall**: But, for boats.

**Adrian Walker**: Oh, I love that. Thanks for that, Mike. That’s a neat way of putting it. Yeah.

**Mike McDowall**: So, there are people seeking boats. There are boats seeking people on your website, basically. That’s how it works.

**Adrian Walker**: Exactly. We’re a boat match-making company. We help boat owners and boat seekers to directly rendezvous online via our boating platform.

**Mike McDowall**: What countries do you operate in?

**Adrian Walker**: Currently, we have a small fleet in Greece and Cyprus. That was a deliberate decision. We wanted to start up in Greece. You’ve got a long season there. You’ve got seven months of fantastic weather to go boating. Our Head of Business Development lives in Athens. That’s why we decided to go to Greece. I have had boat owners approach me from Switzerland. You read about us in Social Media. I’ve got my own boat in South of France I’m renting out in two days. We want to start walking, not running. Prove that the system works. Get some traction going. We want to pretend that we don’t want to scale in the first year. That makes sense. Just to get everything right.

**Mike McDowall**: Yeah, I understand. I mean, the thing about boats and boating, it’s not like renting a car, is it? Because licenses, and permissions, and that sort of thing vary from country to country.

**Adrian Walker**: You’re spot on there. Yeah. Every country carries their own flag. You’ve got insurance issues to worry about. License issues.

**Mike McDowall**: What about things like passage planning and finding a fuel dock, and knowing if you can take a pet. All those little elements which are very simple if you rent a car. It’s very different if you rent a boat.

**Adrian Walker**: We’ve got a messaging function on our online platform. We enable the boat seeker to talk to the boat owner so they can connect online. Whatever questions the boat renter may have, they can ask the boat owner and the other way around. We know that the boat owner wants to know “Who is going to rent my boat?” The boat renter also wants to know, “Do you have an itinerary that you would recommend to us. Where do I get petrol? Can I plan a trip with you onboard, or is it strictly only without a captain?” You’ve got a lot of elements that boat renters want to talk about. You’ve got a lot of issues that boat owners want to ask boat renters. That’s why we created this messaging function.

It looks a bit like WhatsApp to be honest, we made it look like chats It’s really user-friendly, so people actually use it. The boat seekers and boat owners get to interact directly. We’re the matchmaker.

**Mike McDowall**: Things like booking slips, booking a place to park for the night.

**Adrian Walker**: Yeah.

**Mike McDowall**: Have you made arrangements with companies that will organize that?

**Adrian Walker**: Yes, absolutely. We have entered into partnership with another startup from Denmark. If you rent out a sailing boat via our chief platform, you can use our partner App to look for berths in harbors. If you know you’re around Majorca and you’re near this harbor or that harbor, you can actually open your application, look at this harbor, and you can talk to the harbor directly and ask them, “Look, I’ll be at your harbor this afternoon at around 5:00 PM. My sailing yacht is eight meters long. I’ll need a berth for the night. Would you have one?”

**Mike McDowall**: So, BoatAffair, you have to access it by the website or is there an app for your smartphone?

**Adrian Walker**: Currently, we have the website only. However, we’ve got a fantastic mobile-friendly version. Whatever you do on the laptop or your MacBook, you can also do on your mobile device.

**Mike McDowall**: Boat owners in Greece—anyone who owns a boat in Greece, who wants to rent out that boat, they can go to your website, BoatAffair, right now and they can list their boat and find renters for their boat. What do they do? How easy is it?

**Adrian Walker**: The moment you decide, “I’m going to rent out my boat,” you can go to our website and you can register your profile. That’s very easy. It will take you less than two minutes to register your profile. Once you’ve got your profile, you hit the button, *List My Boat*. We will guide you through the entire process. It’s really straightforward. It’s all on one page. We recommend you upload 5 to 10 high-quality pictures. The better the pictures, the more likely it is you’ll rent out the boat. Say a word or two, a sentence or two about your insurance. You get to choose from one of our five cancellation policies. That’s it. Then, you click *Submit*. Your boat is submitted to our management team. We will typically respond within 24 hours. We will then approve the boat. It’s a straight-forward process. It’s all on one page. We made sure that it’s intuitive.

**Mike McDowall**: This is a fantastic way to make ownership and boat use more affordable.

**Adrian Walker**: Absolutely. You can get back some of the costs that you’ve incurred. You get to share the cost with your boat renters. Boat renters have an transparent process of finding a boat. It’s a win-win situation.

**Mike McDowall**: Adrian Walker, thank you so much for talking to Boat Radio.

**Adrian Walker**: Mike, it’s been my pleasure. I’ve really enjoyed this conversation. Thank you so much for having us. For having me on this program. Yeah, thanks a lot.

**Mike McDowall**: You’re listening to Boat Radio. After the break, Sarah O’Kelly in conversation with dolphin conservation expert, Dr. Stefan Harzen from the Taras Oceanographic Foundation. He has one or two controversial views. Back in a couple of minutes.

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I’m John Herlig. In *Postcards from Sea*, I tell stories of my travels aboard Ave del Mar, my 1967 Rosen Cutter. I deal with serious nautical issues like how to sail your mast into a tree on a canal, what kind of incense best covers the aroma of kimchi fermenting on your boat, or whether or not I can beat a Leukemia patient at a video game. It’s simply the story of my life. My life happens to take place on a 50-year-old sailboat with no particular destination in mind. I hope you’ll join me and some of the wonderful characters I meet as I travel from my show, *Postcards from Sea*. Every other Monday, here on Boat Radio.

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This is Carolyn Shearlock from the Boat Galley. If you’re going to the Indianapolis Sailboat Show, October 5th to 9th, 2017, be sure to stop by and see me in booth M5. On the show map, it will be listed as Lynn Purdy’s booth and yep, she’ll be there too, as well as several others. It’s going to be a great time. I can’t wait to meet everybody.

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**Sarah O’Kelly**: Hi, this is Sarah O’Kelly here with Skipper’s Review. I am actually here with Stefan Harzen of the Taras Oceanographic Foundation. I wanted to get in touch with Stefan. Maybe my first thoughts were because I know that he does a lot of work with dolphins. He’s the chairman of the Foundation. We all love dolphins. They have this beautiful smile. They interact with people. I’m sure there’s more to it than the beauty and the characters of the dolphins. Why is it that you decided that this was the creature that you wanted to conserve and save?

**Dr. Stefan Harzen**: Well, I guess as a kid when I grew up, I just liked dolphins. It was at a time when Jacques Cousteau had all these TV shows in Europe. I grew up in Germany. That was your entryway to ocean science. Really what was on TV. There weren’t that many books published and written at the time. There was one German guy by the name of Hans Hass who was out there the same time but didn’t get the public exposure that Jacques Cousteau got with the Calypso. It was a much bigger operation. Hans Hass was a one-man team. He didn’t really make a lot on television. For me, it all goes back to my last years in high school.

**Sarah O’Kelly**: Yeah, I was just going to say I haven’t heard of him either. It’s funny. Jacques Cousteau made an impression on me and many, many people. He made quite the impression on the world. I think my school project was on Jacques Cousteau. What kind of work is the Foundation actually doing for dolphins?

**Dr. Stefan Harzen**: We are doing what we would call dolphin conservation research, which is to say that we’re trying to understand how many dolphins actually live in these waters of Palm Beach County. One species, two species. We know there are two, Bottle Nosed dolphins, Atlantic spotted dolphins. We like to know how many of them are there, what they’re doing, whether they are there all the time, how much they depend on local food chains that sustain them, whether they show any signs of health issues or stress. These are at the core of the studies we are doing.

A lot of it we do is sort of repetitive. You go out and take pictures of animals. You try to find out who they are and when they’re out there. In a way, not everything is science—in science is completely new. You do a lot of things over and over again to get enough data to understand whether they are permanent issues or whether they are temporary phenomenon that you’re looking at. In a way, we’re trying to figure out how many dolphins live here, whether they are in good health. Then we use that to project on our own health and well-being since we share some of the same resources. We eat some of the same fish. If dolphins are doing fairly well, we could surmise that the fish are still pretty healthy or not, too contaminated, and we can still eat it too.

**Sarah O’Kelly**: What are the big dangers for dolphins at the moment?

**Dr. Stefan Harzen**: Nets, fishing nets, fishing gear, lines, any kind of man-made objects like plastic, plastic bags, straws. You find all sorts of stuff in the ocean because we keep throwing our trash into the ocean thinking that it is just one bottomless pit of available space where we can just drop things. If you go along the beach you find anything from needles and hospital stuff to regular household rubbish. That’s one part.

Then, you have the invisible form of pollution, which is all the stuff that is in water in solution. It could be household chemicals that make it through the treatment plants. Could be chemicals that you find in medicines. Even anti-baby pills. Some of the chemicals that are in there actually make it through the water treatment plants. Then, it leads to infertility in fish. So, we do fish populations. Obviously, if there are less fish, then dolphins have issues.

There are other things like heavy metals and PCBs that you find in plastic and other man-made objects. They slowly creep into the water column. Then, you find them in tissue of marine mammals or the predators because it all accumulates over time. Things like DDT, that we don’t use anymore, you still find in marine mammals even though it’s out of use, at least in the civilized, so-called industrialized world.

**Sarah O’Kelly**: So, the DDT is soaked up by the plastic which is broken down by the sun? How does DDT—

**Dr. Stefan Harzen**: The chemical itself ends up in solution in water. From there, from the land-based water sources, it eventually ends up in the ocean. Then, with the ocean currents, it circulates around. It gets into the food chain. Because you are basically then looking at a molecular level. Molecules are embedded in microorganisms are eaten by other organisms. Eventually, creep up the food chain to fish. Then, fish is eaten by seals, or marine mammals, or by sharks. They are in tissue. Over time and many years accumulates in our bodies too.

**Sarah O’Kelly**: So, a bottle gets thrown in the ocean. Over time it gets broken down. How long does it take before it becomes harmful, broken down into molecules where it’s now the fish are eating it along with—without even realizing it, they are eating it along with eating other fish?

**Dr. Stefan Harzen**: I think we have to distinguish if you enter a chemical into the environment versus an object because a chemical is introduced into the environment in some kind of connection with water already, as being the solution in which it is applied. Right? If you have a plastic bottle that would be—that’s a real object, so it would be broken down probably by UV radiation. At the end of the day, it can be broken down into very small, tiny particles of plastic. Some of them will take 100s of years or maybe 1,000s of years to really be completely eliminated. What we are facing now in terms of plastic pollution is that a lot of these microplastic pieces are floating around in the gyres of the Pacific and the Atlantic, which are basically circulation patterns. They accumulate in certain areas. Then, they are introduced into the food chain by microorganisms mistakenly ingesting them.

Once they are in the first organisms, then it creeps up through the entire food chain and eventually, comes back to us. If you eat tuna, tuna is loaded in some areas more than others. Tuna is contaminated. All predator fish are contaminated in one way or another. It’s very difficult now to find areas in the world where you have completely contaminated-free marine life.

**Sarah O’Kelly**: We all have our ideas of how it is that we can help this and prevent it, and different ways we can contribute in not using plastic bags or not using plastic water bottles. What do you feel is the most effective way to start making a change on all of this?

**Dr. Stefan Harzen**: You can not use plastic bottles. You can decide not to use straws. You can decide to walk more and drive less. You can decide what kind of car you buy. Whether to take a bicycle, and the list goes on. There’s no limit to what you can personally do in terms of introducing chemicals into the world. You could just use less as a minimum or use none if you feel comfortable with it. That’s on a personal level.

In terms of confronting damage that is already there, some people go to the beach and collect all the garbage that ends up on the beach, but it’s like ongoing work. It never ends. Other people are trying to figure out how we could possibly collect plastic that is drifting at the surface, which is very complicated and really also not feasible because there’s too much stuff out there. There are not enough resources to collect all these things. Prevention would be the big thing. Then, it’s therapeutic in terms of what you can do. It’s like when you get sick. Then, your physician is telling you, “Well, you should eat more vitamin C and more fruit and vegetables. But, now you’re sick. He’s going to treat the sickness and then maybe you change your lifestyle. But, maybe that’s hard. Maybe you like all the stuff that’s not healthy and you keep eating it. Then, you get some much antibiotics or whatever. Then, you’re not sick anymore. Then, you’ll be sick again in five years. In a way, it’s with nature the same. It’s just a much bigger system. Much more complicated.

**Sarah O’Kelly**: In what countries do you feel are really causing the most damage to dolphins right now?

**Dr. Stefan Harzen**: Well, I think all the countries have the highest consumption rate of things. I mean, if you live somewhere in a village and you depend on the ocean, and the villagers don’t shop at Amazon. They don’t buy anything they don’t really need. They don’t have cell phones. I think those basic lifestyles that are in sync with nature more than our lifestyles today. They obviously have far less impact than the way we live because a lot of people buy things they don’t need, but just want. They don’t really understand or care to understand where the raw materials are coming from. They throw food away if they just have too much on their plate. They don’t care. There are huge waste streams in industrialized countries. I think they still bear the greatest burden of polluting the world with chemicals that are very difficult to get out of the system once they are in them.

**Sarah O’Kelly**: As far as netting or poaching or capturing, what are the laws, for instance, in Florida as opposed to somewhere else with netting? Or, are there laws?

**Dr. Stefan Harzen**: That’s a good question. I’m not sure I have really a good answer. I think people like the folks from Fish and Wildlife, they would know exactly what the regulations are in terms of what you can and cannot do in terms of fishing. We still have local fishing industry. For instance, in Jupiter, we have fishermen who come here for the King Fish season and for other species that are open for fishing at certain periods. They land fish here that are worth, I think it’s a million dollars a year. It’s still some local fisheries. I don’t think these small fisheries are really a problem.

The problem is big factory-based—factory-ship-based fisheries. China, Taiwan. I don’t know who else is really out there today in this great numbers, but these two countries, for sure. They’re on all seven seas. I mean, they’re fishing as if there was no tomorrow. The fishing signs or the regulatory agencies like the Marine Fishery Service and people like that, they try to come up with models and predict what are the reproduction rates, what is the stock size of the population of a particular species? Then, they have seasons that are shorter or longer. They assign limits to how much you can legally fish. Of course, there are always people that fish illegally. Nobody really knows how much damage they do, other than that they really shouldn’t be out there if they are not having the proper permits.

I think dolphins, in that sense, the way we think about it is that they are like ambassadors. There are others like mega vertebras is oversized imagery that people have when they think about dolphins being nice to humans, saving humans, maybe talk like humans, think like humans. Even though all that is really fuzzy, not real science. We like to believe certain things. We like to believe that we’re not alone on the planet or alone in the universe. What if dolphins were just like another form of highly-intelligent species.

**Sarah O’Kelly**: What about that. I mean, they are supposed to be very intelligent creatures. Have you got any stories to demonstrate that?

**Dr. Stefan Harzen**: Let’s say if you compare to human intelligence, what does make us intelligent beings? The ability. We have a language. We have the ability to look at things in an abstract way so we can play it out in your heads—in our heads without having to see things. We have different ways of communicating, of course. When you look at dolphins, they can do certain—they’re well adapted. In an ecological sense, they’re highly intelligent. But, that is almost—that’s too for all the species that survive. They are intelligent in that sense.

Dolphins don’t have arms like we do. Still, they sort of can at least use things to play. Whether they can use things as a tool like some primates do. Like chimps use little sticks to get the ants out of a hole. We use tools and have been using tools, one of the trademarks of the human species. I’m not so sure about dolphins. Do they have a language? I’m not sure. It depends a little bit on how you define language, I suppose. Can they communicate amongst themselves? Yes. Can they use that communication to perceive the world? Yes. We are visual. They are auditory. We see the world visually. I think from all the research we have seen, we know that dolphins perceive the world acoustically. In a way, I imagine they see us from a school of fish. We would see it with our eyes and see the fish that way. They probably have a representation that also tells them what kind of fish and how many of them and how big the fish is. They do it acoustically. That’s very difficult for us now to envision how they would look like. It’s some kind of—what’s the footprint of that in your brain or in your consciousness?

That’s the other thing. What about conscious. Our intelligence includes the ability to create art. To paint. To make music. To do other things. Do dolphins have that ability? Well, we really don’t know. I doubt we will ever find out because despite some people running around and trying to show that dolphins actually can communicate with people, that’s not really a scientific method.

**Sarah O’Kelly**: What is your goal, then of your organization?

**Dr. Stefan Harzen**: To use, but not in a negative connotation. Take advantage, let’s say of the human love for dolphins and the attractions to dolphins. To speak to the larger ocean-related environmental issues. If we can talk about how dolphins are afflicted by some of the pollutants and get sick, and that this eventually also catches up to us, then I think it’s easier to persuade people to be more attentive, to be more appreciative of the natural systems in a healthy status rather than risking the destruction or risking that there’s a negative impact by our actions. I think you have a chance to get people to listen to you. To maybe find it more interesting. To explore how nature works and what we need to do to protect our nature that supports our existence rather than talking about in an abstract or a professorial way that has no emotional components. In a way, it’s an emotional way of trying to persuade people to do more to protect the systems that support our lifestyle.

**Sarah O’Kelly**: What are you seeing that’s working the best? What’s getting through to people when you explain what’s happening to dolphins. What is happening to dolphins right now specifically in the last say five years or so?

**Dr. Stefan Harzen**: Education doesn’t work. I don’t think that education has produced the outputs or the outcomes that we thought it would because we started talking about these environmental issues in the 1970s. If you look at the output and the actual change in lifestyle, there’s not a lot of positive output. People still live in this kind of laisser-faire attitude and don’t really care that much. They run to see whales and dolphins and pay a hundred bucks, they yell and scream in excitement when they see something. As soon as they get back to port they jump into their SUV and drive home to a home that is really too big for two people, uses too much energy to sustain. But, they want the big house.

I think the most efficient way that I can see when you look at America over the last 50 years is if we, instead of using money to educate people about it, just to give it to Madison Avenue and have them run advertising. Advertising is so sublime. It gets people to do the stuff that the advertisers want them to do. Right? People go and buy certain cars because the advertising is appealing. They drink certain things because the advertising is appealing. They behave in certain ways because they want to be part of a lifestyle. If we manage to turn doing ocean research and doing conservation work and make it a lifestyle issue, I think we have a chance. To make it a lifestyle issue we need some people constantly, that don’t really belong to each other. Constantly manage to get into the heads of people and make them do things they don’t really want to do.

They didn’t ask to have a Hummer vehicle. They were built because there was a market for it. Somebody figured out that there would be some buyers. It’s the same with the phone. We had a very good life without a cell phone. Right? People were not always feeling the need to be reachable. Then they came up with the cell phone. They made it smaller so everybody could have one. Made it cheaper. Now, everybody not only has a cell phone, but they also have this kind of impression that without a cell phone, they’re naked. They’re not reachable and “God forbid, I’m not reachable. I should be available to everybody all the time.” Now, you have kids that don’t talk to each other but use a cell phone to text.

I’m always seeing this as a regression so that 500 or 1,000 years from now when they dig out our garbage bin to find out what we threw away and how we lived, which is part of archaeology today. Then, we went from sign language in caves to really sophisticated language system. Then, 500 years later we’re back to sign language basically, which is emojis.

**Sarah O’Kelly**: We’re just going to take a quick break and we’ll be back with Stefan. I actually want to hear about your wife, Barbara, and her involvement in your organization.

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**Sarah O’Kelly**: Okay, I’m back here with Stefan Harzen of the—I’ll let you pronounce it.

**Dr. Stefan Harzen**: Taras Oceanographic Foundation. Within that, we have a very easily pronounceable word and that’s Palm Beach Dolphin Project. That’s much easier for most people. That’s sort of the framework for all our conservation research which we do. We used to do a radio show called *Dolphin Dialogs*, which I did for years. The Foundation, in addition to dolphin conservation research, we still do lecture series which is called *Meet The Scientist Lecture Series*. We also do a concert series called *Ocean of Notes Concert Series*. These are the three things we do. We try to find names for all three programs that are easy to identify and have a certain ring to it. That’s why we call it Palm Beach Dolphin Project because we are studying dolphins in Palm Beach County.

The lecture series is an education program together with Jupiter High School. It’s meant to provide an informational nexus for people to meet scientists that live here, work here, or do both. Some of the scientists live here and work in Africa or some other place. Some of the people like the Max   
Planck, scientists, or scribes who moved here in the last 10 years; they live and work here. Then, we have some people who study here for a while but are not really living here or are just temporary. The lecture series talks about all sorts of things related to science, conservation, sustainability. We talk about ecotourism, eco-lodges. That’s architectural design. We could talk about some regulatory issues. We talk about dolphins every year. There are many different topics. The whole idea is that people don’t recognize that they live among scientists or that scientist live on their street or in their town. If they knew then that a lot of them are timid, or ask, or talk to scientist because they think we are bored by simple questions. The lecture series is an attempt to facilitate communication.

The concert series is also not a fundraiser. It’s another outreach program, both of which we call edutainment. It has an educational component and an entertainment component. The concert series is also a brain-child of ours because it combines science and music. There are similarities that one could talk about for hours between music and science. Basically, the concert is a public event for people to come out, enjoy live performances of recording artist. Then, we always build some kind of interesting module into the concert to tell people about our work, the importance of ocean conservation, and so on. It’s a nice way for people to have lots of fun and at the same time to learn something about their environment. People who live here don’t know a lot about the ocean. A lot of people look at the ocean like it was an amenity and not a resource. This is one way of facilitating a better understanding of the importance of the Deep Blue Sea.

**Sarah O’Kelly**: Now, I mentioned that we were going to talk about your wife, Barbara. What is her role in this whole organization?

**Dr. Stefan Harzen**: Barbara is a dolphin scientist in her own right. She grew up in California. She was among the first disciples of the guy by the name of John Alden who really started Whale Watch and doing the first courses about whale biology were not in any college. He used to be the director of the Kaperna Marina Aquarium in St. Peter, California. In the late 1970s, he started this whale watch groups on the beach. There were 200 high school kids that came out and sat on the beach. John would give his animated talks about whales and rowing on the ocean. All the wonderful things on the ocean that he had experienced.

Barbara was one of the first groups of people. John was a guy who never said, “No.” If you had a dream, he would help you make it reality. If you didn’t have a dream, he would sit down and try to help you find your dream. Then, make it reality. Barbara, in the 1970s, was with Bob Talbot who became a famous photographer and also did some films about marine life. They got together through this group and they wanted to go and study killer whales in Vancouver. In the late 1970s, there was almost nobody there.

Long story short. Bob Talbot, and another friend of theirs, and Barbara, they were the first people to do some underwater video and sound recording of killer whales in the wild. They actually sold some of their material to Jacques Cousteau for film on TV. Then, later she was a student of Ken Norris, who is largely considered one of the main principles of this new science called Marine Mammal Science because before the 1960s there was no such thing as Marine Mammal Science. Nobody studied dolphins or whales. That was just unheard of. Ken Norris from the University of Southern California Santacruz, he was one of the legends. Barbara worked with him. Then, she came over to Florida to work with another project on spotted dolphins in the Bahamas. She wrote her Ph.D. about that. Then, our paths crossed along the way. She was already here. I used to be in Portugal and studied dolphins there. Then, I came over. Then, we started the Taras Oceanographic Foundation and the Palm Beach Dolphin Project together trying to study a new population that nobody was paying attention to.

**Sarah O’Kelly**: Tell me about the romance. How did you find each other?

**Dr. Stefan Harzen**: We actually met at one of these Marine Mammal Conferences. When I was out here we briefly saw each other over dinner when I was at this project’s study site in the Bahamas in 1993 or so. Then, we met again at the conference. She came to visit me in Portugal to see what I was doing there. I was just finishing my Ph.D. before she had started hers. Then, when she started hers I supported her as much as possible to finish hers. Then, we ended up with this project. It was a long-distance relationship for a few years because I was living over there and she was here in Florida. Then, we basically decided that it would be easier for me to come here than for her to move to Portugal.

**Sarah O’Kelly**: Another thing I wanted to talk about, too, is you were earlier talking about dolphins, the main way they communicate and see things is not actually through their eyes. It’s through audio. Something I noted when I was having a look at your work was their hearing is being affected by the oil rigs when they’re actually drilling.

**Dr. Stefan Harzen**: I should start by saying that we are not really studying acoustic profiles or acoustic impact. The other people have specialized equipment to do that. Study specifically whales because they seem to be more impacted because these blasts are more the low-frequency range that impacts whales more than possibly dolphins, which is not to say that it doesn’t influence dolphins. Obviously, there’s a whole lot of noise going on in the ocean now that is man-made. We know from our own experience that there’s a lot of background noise and our hearing becomes more difficult. If you’re in a group of people in a room at a reception, there are 100 people in the room and you want to talk to somebody, you really have to focus and zero in to hear what a person standing just two feet from you is saying to you because of all this background noise. They surely are impacted in a way that their communication signals are now layered over with all the man-made noise.

Now, the Navy does some experiments with sonar. The industry that is trying to explore natural resources on the sea floor. They create a lot of noise. There are many environmental impacts. It’s sometimes difficult to draw a very clear line between cause and effect. Then, the people who are responsible for the impact always use that weakness in the scientific process to their advantage and say, “Hey, you can’t really say for sure.” Then we are honest and say, “Well, we can’t really say for sure, but all indications are.” But, then this little piece of doubt is going to be used against us. People will argue that it’s not really them with the sonar blasts or whatever who impact. I think it’s fair to say that they are negatively impacted. It can actually kill them either directly or indirectly. If their hearing is impacted, they might have real difficulties finding food. That would then lead to malnutrition and eventually death.

I think there’s some clear evidence that points to that. It’s just that here, we don’t have big whales a lot. Once in a while, we have a humpback whale passing by out in the Gulf Stream. The smaller dolphins, here, I think they’re more susceptible to the coastal impact that we are creating by living on the coast. With the things we dump into the ocean, which are activities on land. All that run-off that ends up in the ocean if it’s not treated in water treatment facilities. All the physical stuff. The boats that are out there dump things or they have leaks and then the oil leaks out. These kinds of things you have, obviously. Sea temperatures are rising that has an impact on the coral reef. The coral reef is the home of a lot of fish. The fish are suffering. Eventually, it reaches a level where dolphins might not have enough fish to eat. Then, we would actually see it.

**Sarah O’Kelly**: What is the outcome then you feel, for dolphins within the next 5, 10 years. Is that something that you are able to foresee?

**Dr. Stefan Harzen**: Species like the ones we study here as a species, they’re not really threatened. Almost all dolphins are Atlantic Spotted Dolphins. Then, it becomes an issue of populations or communities if you will. The dolphin community or population we’re looking at here in southeast Florida, Palm Beach County, do we as humans want those dolphins to still be there 50, 100, 500 years from now? If so, what do we need to do to make that work and not push them out because eventually, they don’t find an environment in which they can survive because there’s not enough food, for instance? That’s sort of an ethical or moral decision we have to make.

We are trying to say, “Look at these dolphins. Aren’t they beautiful? Can we take something positive? We can even learn something, maybe, from them and use that to encourage people to find it important enough to protect their own local populations and say, “Yeah. We would like our grandkids to sit on the beach in Jupiter or Palm Beach, or in Boca and still be able to see some dolphins and say, ‘Oh, wow! Look at that.’“

**Sarah O’Kelly**: I wanna go out in the boat someday and do a recording from that. Hopefully, I’ll bring some Irish luck with that and we can see some dolphins.

Sarah O’Kelly was talking to Dr. Stefan Harzen of the Taras Oceanographic Foundation. The Foundation runs the Palm Beach Dolphin Project. If you happen to be in Florida, you can head out to sea with experts from the Foundation and learn all about our favorite ocean mammals. Sarah O’Kelly is the creator and operator of Skipper’s Review, which is an awesome review and recommendation platform for boaters. Check it out at skippersreview.com.

Don’t forget to follow Boat Radio on Twitter and Instagram. Also, to like us on Facebook. And, yes, your ears do not deceive you. That was Sarah O’Kelly singing in her own advert midway through this program. In fact, let’s play it again. Take it away Sarah.

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A quick reminder. I’ll be at the Indianapolis Sailboat Show in booth M5 with Lyn Purdy and others. Stop by. I wanna meet ‘cha.

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