

## The Beagle, On the future of species **8x 52'**

The voyage of the HMS Beagle has been described as the most important journey ever made. During his travels, Charles Darwin gathered information and knowledge that would drastically change the way we look at the world.

With his book "*On the Origin of Species*" (1859) Darwin would be the first to explain that life on earth is not created by God, but rather developed by evolution.

To celebrate Charles Darwin's 200th birth year and the 150th anniversary of his publication of "*On the Origin of Species*", Dutch broadcasting company VPRO in association with Belgian broadcasting company CANVAS has produced a unique television series plus feature film called *Beagle, on the future of species*. Life on earth is under continual change. Is there reason to worry about the future? Can science offer us sufficient answers to some of our most compelling questions? Are we leaving behind an inhabitable world for future generations?

### 1. One small step for man...

In September 2009 the clipper 'Stad Amsterdam' set sail to circumnavigate the earth, repeating the most important journey ever made. Far more important than man's voyage to the moon. It is a voyage that took the young naturalist Charles Darwin five years 179 years ago, and the passengers of the clipper eight months. Darwin's travels changed our ideas of time, space, chance, sex and nature. What a privilege to be able to do them all over again! All the beauty and profusion in a world full of wondrous forms.

Darwin's granddaughter, Sarah Darwin, and British author Redmond O'Hanlon will be repeating this journey. To them, it is a chance of several lifetimes.

And now? Now we will look at the state the world is in - and what possible consequences this could have for our future. With this in mind different scientists and artists have been invited aboard at different stages of the journey.

### 2. Low life on the ladder of God

The first leg of the journey goes from England to Tenerife and Cape Verde, and takes us to Salvador de Bahia in Brazil. A spectacular beginning to the voyage of a lifetime.

This episode describes the journey from Rio to the southeast of South America, Puerto Madryn. In Rio the travelers are confronted with Brazil's horrifying history of slavery, a history that has left its traces in the country even today.

But the ship sails on - to relive Darwin's discovery of the gigantic fossil mammals of South America. The end of this journey brings us to a unique place; one of the oceans delivery rooms.

### 3. The last frontier

We all love fish - but we are running the risk of seeing them go extinct. Could extending the fishing limits to the center of every ocean solve the problem?

The Yagan Indians were killed off by good intentions: with the missionaries came lethal diseases from the civilized world. And then the genocidal European settlers arrived. We visit the last full-blooded Yagan Indian in Tierra del Fuego, before sailing on through the notorious waters of Cape Horn, where the Beagle was very nearly shipwrecked.

### 4. The final countdown

We say goodbye to one of the few remaining glaciers on earth to sail north. On board are two environmental activists: Douglas Tompkins and his wife Kristine McDivitt. Having sold their clothing companies and become multimillionaires, they have dedicated themselves entirely to environmental activism and land conservation. Their love for the Chilean landscape led them to buy a large piece of land and sustain it as a nature reserve: the Pumalin National Park. *Humans create their own problems - but is humanity smart enough to avert its self-inflicted disasters...*

The Andes produce deep thought about deep time and deep space. The snow and the glaciers of the Andes also provide the source of all the waters in the lowlands. The glaciers are melting, and the water supplies are dwindling. What does a city like Lima have to do to protect itself from these effects of climate change?

### 5. The paradise of competition

We're off again, sailing for months along the coasts of South America. Now we're on our way to The Galapagos. A Mecca for every naturalist. An island of dreams made of reason. Darwin's reason - where the foundations for his greatest discovery were laid. A teenage dream come true for Redmond O'Hanlon.

Next, O'Hanlon leaves the clipper briefly to fly to Indonesia - in search of the story of Darwin's greatest rival - the man who technically takes priority for the theory of evolution by natural selection - Alfred Russell Wallace. The journey is made in order to find the most desirable of all the birds of paradise - because it is the only one that Wallace discovered: the Standard Wing.

On the island of **Tahiti** the clipper is rejoined, in time for the great crossing of the Pacific Ocean. Astonishingly, our planet is composed of 70% water. *This water is more important to us than anyone could imagine. We humans have much more in common with other life forms than Wallace or Darwin could have thought... if we take care of the oceans, we take care of ourselves...*

### 6. Do It Yourself survival

**Australia** - the dry continent where Charles Darwin found nothing and where he stayed only briefly. How could he have foreseen that the population there would start to experiment with new ways of agriculture, unhindered by traditions left behind in England?

The Red Continent is beautiful, but shows no mercy. Drought, heat, isolation and disease put extreme demands on the survival strategies of man and animal. *How does man cope with the*

*harsh environment? Can geo-engineering prevent his extinction? Is his Do It Yourself survival kit good enough to save him?*

## **7. Adapt or Die!**

The Clipper is still anchored in Australia – the plagued and exhausted continent. We take a close look at the solutions that science has to offer to prevent mass extinctions. Australia is the country of the future – especially when it comes to genetic modification.

*But who are we to try to manage evolution? Are we adapting or are we just delaying our imminent extinction?*

## **8. The ruins of progress**

After two-and-a-half weeks at sea the clipper arrives in Mauritius, a small island in the Indian Ocean, a few hundred kilometers east of Madagascar. Mauritius remained uninhabited until Dutch seafarers settled there in 1589.

Mauritius and the Dodo – that strange flightless bird, the first animal to become extinct due to the actions of modern humans – are inextricably linked. Since Darwin's time many animals have disappeared from the face of the earth because of us, but the Dodo became the symbol of the often destructive presence of mankind.

70% percent of the waste in the oceans consists of plastic. Together with restoring the fish stocks, cleaning up our oceans will be the greatest challenge.

We end our journey who may have a direct ancestry that stretches back 150 000 years. Today their culture is artificially kept alive. Is it right to preserve them in a state of so-called primitiveness purely for our pleasure?

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