



Catching Thunder: The Story of the World's Longest Sea Chase

Eskil Engdal

Kjetil Saeter

Diane Oatley, Translator

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Norwegian journalists Eskil Engdal and Kjetil Sæter deliver a true story that reads like a spy novel, peppered with scary organized crime villains, charismatic environmental activists and Interpol agents, and enough tidbits about sailing treacherous seas, commercial fishing, and endangered species to satisfy the most dedicated nautical adventure fan.

The *Thunder* of the title was a notorious illegal factory fishing vessel that poached lucrative catches of toothfish, otherwise known as Chilean sea bass, for years in the Southern Ocean. The nonprofit Sea Shepherd Conservation Society took on the charge of rounding up *Thunder* and other illegal fishing boats in their targeted “Bandit 6” after their efforts to interrupt Japanese whaling in Antarctic waters, chronicled on the popular cable television show *Whale Wars*, proved successful.

Equipped with a nimble ship loaded with excellent radar and communications technology, Sea Shepherd captain Peter Hammarstedt and his crew were fortunate to locate *Thunder* early in their December 2014 patrol mission while their food and fuel reserves were high. The authors smartly punctuate the subsequent 111-day account of the sea chase with less action-filled but no less intriguing asides about how illegal fishing ships are surreptitiously registered and bankrolled, their inequitable treatment of fishing crews, problems with international fishing and marine sanctuary regulations and enforcement, and money laundering and corruption in various Asian, African, and European ports of call.

The book suffers from occasional bouts of awkward dialogue and translations, as well as from Sea Shepherd hero worship, but despite these choppy waters, the narrative is exciting and illuminating. This is an all too rare positive, satisfying story about how the forces of good won out over criminals and other self-interested baddies, and how they helped to protect our environment.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (March/April 2018)

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