

SUPERYACHTLIFE



The heart of the yachting community

The idea of ‘giving back’ doesn’t just mean contributing to big-ticket ocean conservation projects, as important as they are. Indeed, a surprising number of yacht owners and crews are quietly making a big difference in a lot of little ways.

By **Charlotte Thomas** | 24 August 2021

It's easy to think of ocean stewardship purely in terms of the big-bang projects that have garnered increasing attention over recent years. [The Blue Marine Foundation](#), for example, has made headlines with its drive to highlight the problem of overfishing and to push for the creation of marine protected areas. [The Water Revolution Foundation](#) is taking an insider approach to drive sustainability and ocean conservation within the superyacht industry. And of course there are the well-known superyacht owners or well-known superyachts that have made specific contributions to the fields of ocean conservation, marine science, or general eco-responsibility.



The late, great Tom Perkins – owner of the iconic *Maltese Falcon* and its Deep Flight Super Falcon submersible – created his final yacht *Dr No* by converting a commercial vessel specifically so it could serve as a more practical platform for ocean studies. The late Paul Allen often offered his 126m expedition yacht *Octopus* for scientific ocean studies, backed up with ocean-orientated projects within the philanthropic [Paul G. Allen Foundation](#). The [REV Ocean](#) project was conceived specifically with scientific research and charter in mind. And in Switzerland, the multi-generational yacht-owning Bertarelli family has been prominent in ocean conservation work through the Bertarelli Foundation.

However, the big-ticket conservation drives and big-name backers are only part of the story, and a phalanx of owners, charterers, yacht guests and crews are showing not only that even small actions can make a big difference, but also that it has never been easier to give back – and in doing so, to ensure we will all get to enjoy the oceans and their idyllic retreats for the future. To get a feel for these unspoken heroes, one only has to look at the work of [YachtAid Global](#).



Founded in 2006 by Captain Mark Drewelow, [YachtAid Global](#) was born from Drewelow's own experiences at sea, which culminated in a decade as master of the 33 metre yacht *Dorothea*. "In that 10-year period we did a slow circumnavigation," Drewelow begins, "and we went to something like 65 or 70 countries. It was my experience as a captain and with the owners, guests and crew in those remote, pristine places, and with the local people who host you, that inspired YachtAid Global. They give us their land, their sea and their spirit for very little in return."

Drewelow returned to shore in 2003 and, in San Diego, founded superyacht agents C2C. "We immediately looked at how we could be corporately responsible, and we

wondered how we could work with those communities I had visited, but there really weren't any options. Then on 5 May 2005 I woke up with the brainwave – I realised that C2C's client base is a pipeline to move aid all around the world. YachtAid Global was born – we started doing simple school aid and taking a guess at what people needed. It was initially more about trying to help people with whom I had connections, and it was worked almost in reverse in terms of how do we get something to Tahiti or to Bali, for example. It's been a very organic evolution.”

An evolution it certainly has been. Fifteen years later, YachtAid Global is a serious organisation that works at local, regional and national levels around the world. It has a string of ongoing projects in places as far afield as Fiji, the Galapagos, the Caribbean, Mexico and Central America, and it is involved in everything from supplying local schools and communities with books to providing clean drinking water, and from marine studies and data collection to full-on disaster relief in the wake of tropical storms or other natural disasters.

For Captain Zoran Selakovic, who joined YachtAid Global in 2016 as Director, it serves as the perfect combination of his seafaring experience and his desire to make a difference. “It's very humbling,” he offers. “It's people's communities. And while we are probably now

60-40 in terms of capital-intensive projects versus physically bringing cargo from point A to point B, the latter remains critical because the last-mile logistics are very challenging in any aid operation.”

A prime example of how critically important that is is how yachts – coordinated by YachtAid Global – have been able to deliver essential supplies and relief aid to remote areas post-natural disaster, as well as being able to make use of onboard systems such as watermakers to provide for affected communities, and all without impacting on the local infrastructure as the yachts are both self-contained and self-supporting.

As Selakovic explains, however, it’s the less headline-grabbing elements that can make all the difference.

“When you visit somewhere with your yacht, particularly somewhere more remote, paying your bills and that sort of thing is helpful, but what is even more helpful is to help out with the schools, the libraries, the clinics – things that make communities. Communities make those people strong and better able to withstand future disasters, as well as being healthier and stronger when we want to come visit and be a part of their community for a short period of time. It’s also part of understanding and

changing their behaviours, because these communities play a critical role in the wider ocean conservation effort.”

It’s a drive that is clearly paying dividends, and if you want proof of just how much the yachting community has been getting involved, consider this: YachtAid Global has undertaken in the region of 190 projects since 2006 and, perhaps more pertinently, more than 250 yachts have joined YachtAid Global projects in that same period. It shows not only that we can all make a difference in our own small way, but also that we frequently do – and that is a heartwarming thought indeed.