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DESPITE LAST YEAR'S APPARENT VICTORY BY THE SEA SHEPHERDS, THE WAR RAGES ON AS ANIMAL PLANET RETURNS WITH "WHALE WARS"

– More Determined than Ever, the Sea Shepherds Unleash a Powerful Arsenal of Improved Strategy, Tactics and Introduce New Crew Members to Stave off Japanese Whalers in "Operation Divine Wind" –

(New York, April 24, 2012) – At the end of the fourth season of **WHALE WARS**, the Sea Shepherds declared a cautious victory against the Japanese whalers, turning them away and saving hundreds of whales. So when the whalers declared their intentions to return to the Southern Ocean – this time escorted by a security vessel – the Sea Shepherds quickly scrambled to mobilize their ships and crew to stop them.

Animal Planet's Emmy-nominated **WHALE WARS** returns for a fifth season beginning **Friday, June 1 at 9 PM (ET/PT)** with eight engaging new episodes and a one-hour recap special documenting the Sea Shepherd's annual whale defense campaign in the Southern Ocean. But this season, the Sea Shepherds will face the greatest opposition ever as they suspect Japanese whalers will be more aggressive and will have zero tolerance for the direct action conservation group. But another challenge for Watson and his crew– with a surprising number of rookies joining their organization – were themselves, hoping that, their passion can only go so far to overcome inexperience and mistakes.

With a fleet including three harpoon ships, a factory ship and a security ship, the Japanese government wanted to ensure a successful whaling season, free of conflicts. Anticipating the battle of a lifetime, the Sea Shepherds once again are trolling the Antarctic with surprise tactics, intense strategy and unparalleled passion. **WHALE WARS** documents the Sea Shepherd's "Operation Divine Wind" from December 2011 through February 2012.

"Now, I think that the Japanese whaling fleet is more motivated by revenge, and they're acting out of desperation more than anything," said Captain Paul Watson. "We've defeated them, and this last season was a total humiliation for them. So, we expect that they're going to be quite angry, but we're not going to be deterred by their threats. We're going to block their operations."

This season, the Sea Shepherds face a multitude of tribulations, including a damaged rudder on the *Steve Irwin*, an inexperienced helicopter pilot bought in to replace veteran Chris Aultman, potential crew tension with the return of Peter Brown, a new captain for the *Brigitte Bardot*, the most extreme weather conditions ever seen in the **WHALE WARS** saga and more. They trudge through unpredictable waters of the Southern Ocean, carefully maneuver around ice fields and endure unrelenting storms all while trying to remain hidden from the Japanese security fleet. One wrong move can result in the deaths of countless intelligent whales – and human life.

The companion series to **WHALE WARS** – **WHALE WARS: VIKING SHORES** – debuts on Animal Planet on Friday, April 27 at 9 PM.

The Academy of Television Arts and Sciences recognized **WHALE WARS** in 2009 for exploring issues of concern to our society in a compelling, emotional and insightful way by bestowing the series with a Television Academy Honor which identifying it as “television with a conscience.” The series has been nominated for a Primetime Emmy® for Outstanding Cinematography in a Non-Fiction Series (three times), Outstanding Picture Editing for a Non-Fiction Series and Outstanding Sound Editing for a Non-Fiction Series. Seasons one through three of the series are available on DVD at AnimalPlanetStore.com.

Liz Bronstein is the executive producer for The Lizard Trading Company, and Jason Carey is the executive producer for Animal Planet. Charlie Foley is the senior vice president of development for Animal Planet.

Animal Planet Media (APM), a multi-media business unit of Discovery Communications, is the world's only entertainment brand that immerses viewers in the full range of life in the animal kingdom with rich, deep content via multiple platforms and offers animal lovers and pet owners access to a centralized online, television and mobile community for immersive, engaging, high-quality entertainment, information and enrichment. APM consists of the Animal Planet television network, available in more than 96 million homes in the US; online assets www.animalplanet.com, the ultimate online destination for all things animal; the 24/7 broadband channel, Animal Planet Beyond; Petfinder.com, the #1 pet-related Web property globally that facilitates pet adoption; and other media platforms including a robust Video-on-Demand (VOD) service; mobile content; and merchandising extensions.

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