

# Basic Detail Report

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## MY Steve Irwin

**Vessel number**

HV000789

**Date**

1974

**Primary Maker**

Hall,Russell & Co

## Description

M/Y STEVE IRWIN was built in 1975 by Hall, Russell & Company, Aberdeen, Scotland for the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency and is a steel hulled Island class patrol vessel. It was built as a conservation enforcement patrol boat and is 59m long, 11m wide and 5 m draught. In 2006 it became a nature conservation vessel and the flagship for the Sea Shepherd organisation, where it was renamed M/Y ROBERT HUNTER, after Canadian environmental activist Robert Hunter, who alongside Paul Watson (Founder of Sea Shepherd Conservation Society), was a co-founder of Greenpeace. On the 5th of December 2007, Terri Irwin and Captain Paul Watson announced the renaming of the vessel at the Melbourne Docklands after Terri's late husband, the much-loved Australian wildlife warrior Steve Irwin. The M/Y STEVE IRWIN operated out of its base at Seaworks Maritime Precinct, Workshops Pier, Williamstown, Victoria since 2012, when Williamstown was established as Australia's southern operations base for Sea Shepherd. The base was chosen as a gateway to Antarctic whale campaigns and the M/Y STEVE IRWIN has undergone ongoing campaign maintenance by volunteers at this homeport. Operated by a volunteer crew, the M/Y STEVE IRWIN and Sea Shepherd's operations and repairs in Australia and globally have been funded by donations from the Australian public. During its campaigns the M/Y STEVE IRWIN has carried over 800 crew. M/Y STEVE IRWIN'S campaigns in Australia have evolved to include protecting, exploring, raising awareness and promoting the biodiversity of Australian waters and natural marine icons, such as the Great Barrier Reef, Great Australian Bight, Kimberley Coast and Antarctic Southern Ocean Whale sanctuary, including the Australian Whale Sanctuary. The vessel's campaigns have been historically significant in the context of events relating to local maritime community, exploration, fishing and industry. M/Y STEVE IRWIN'S campaigns highlight the environmental, social and political importance of safeguarding the marine environment for Australians today, and for future generations. These campaigns were also very controversial, the M/Y STEVE IRWIN crew's 'non-violent direct action' approach was a means to an end that was questioned widely. Many saw the crew's methods as being hazardous and unlawful, flagrantly breaking the Internationally respected rules for safety at sea (SOLAS), whilst also judging the Japanese whaling programme as unlawful as well. In one incident in 2008, M/Y STEVE IRWIN collided with another Japanese whaling vessel. In another incident that year M/Y STEVE IRWIN attempted to disable a Japanese vessel at close quarters, deploying their RIB in the process. Two crewmembers were detained for two days then released to an Australian customs vessel that was filming the whaling fleet as evidence in a

forthcoming International Court of Justice case that eventually ruled against the Japanese in 2014. Soon after though the Japanese methods of surveillance became too effective for Sea Shepherd to be effective, and in 2017 the organisation suspended further anti-whaling actions. They had also begun to distance themselves from these direct action methods and moved toward a new future with actions to safeguard ocean ecosystems. In 2016 and 2018 Operation Jeedara saw M/Y STEVE IRWIN collaborate with the Great Australian Bight Alliance, former parliamentary leader of the Australian Greens Party Bob Brown, Peter Owen (director of The Wilderness Society South Australia), Mirning Elder Bunna Lawrie, terrestrial and marine scientists from the Ecological Monitoring Department of Environment and Water (DEW) and University of Adelaide to explore the Great Australian Bight. Facilitated by the M/Y STEVE IRWIN, the team collected scientific data, recording the Bight's pristine marine environment, and made a documentary film to showcase to the Australian people, government and world what would be lost if BP was permitted to drill for oil in the Bight, a marine park sanctuary and one of the earths' most intact marine environments. To document the diversity of life in the Bight, the M/Y STEVE IRWIN explored the following places in the Great Australian Bight : The iconic Nullaboor Plain (the longest line of sea cliffs in the world), Pearson Island group, the Bunda cliffs, Nuyts Reef, Fowlers Bay, the Head of the Bight, Kangaroo Island, Isles of St Francis and Baird Bay. The documentary and voyage showcase the large seas typical of the Bight, which highlight the problems around BP's plans to drill for oil in Bight conditions, which often entail swells of 20 metres. In the worst case scenario, drilling here could result in an oil spill that would affect Western Australian, South Australian, Tasmanian and New South Wales coasts. During its life as Flagship of the Sea Shepherd fleet, the M/Y Steve Irwin has hosted numerous film crews and photographers to bring its environmental work and experience to the public, and open its eyes to the beauty of Australian marine environments and what is at stake if we lose them. M/Y STEVE IRWIN has been featured in documentary series such as Animal Planet's Whale Wars (2008-2015), numerous Sea Shepherd documentaries such as Defend, Conserve, Protect (2019) and has a strong social media following. It represents the modern ecological fight and public social movement to protect Australian marine biodiversity, and promote the protection of the oceans. The M/Y Steve Irwin is now part of the Ship4Good not for profit incorporation. M/Y STEVE IRWIN is on stationary display at Seaworks Maritime Precinct Williamstown, Victoria, and offers the public a chance to engage with the vessels' history and nature conservancy legacy. Under Ship4Good, the vessel is being developed into a multi-disciplinary engagement space for education, entertainment and inspiration. There will be a 'campaign room' with information relating to the 17 campaigns the ship was involved in including . videos, plus a tour of the ship to key areas including the bridge, engine room, mess and helipad where additional information will be featured. In addition to this the ship will house bar-cafe and an accommodation option as well. Through these activities the M/Y STEVE IRWIN will continue to be an important part of the Victorian and Australian cultural, community and environmental fabric- and carry on its environmental awareness role, educating the public about the conservation and protection of marine environments.

## **Dimensions**

Vessel Dimensions: 59 m × 4.2 m, 885 tonnes (193.58 ft × 13.78 ft, 870.84 tons)