
(Music)

Jennifer Stock:

Good afternoon, everyone. This is Jennifer Stock. I'm the host for Ocean Currents, which typically plays one Thursday evening a month and rebroadcasts at this time Mondays at one o'clock. So, I'm thrilled to be here on day six of the pledge drive for KWMR. Just to give you a little background on the show today, I recently was reading some books that...I typically don't read books about sports, but because I love to swim I got interested in reading about Lynne Cox, an open-water swimmer and she swam incredible crossings, Catalina Island to the mainland, the English Channel twice, and she went to colder and colder waters and so I had the great opportunity to interview Lynne and that's what I'm going to share with you today and she'll be talking about her newest book, Grayson, on the second half of the show about a swim she had training when she was 17 with a baby gray whale that started following her and it's gray whale season.

So, who knows, we could all end up with a gray whale following us if we're swimming right now, but a really touching story Lynne shares and she'll talk more about it on the second half of the show.

(Music)

Jennifer Stock:

I'm talking with a woman today that has many achievements to honor, not just for her endeavorous swimming records and long-distance crossings, but for her incredible spirit and ability to bring people together. Lynne Cox was inducted into the swimming hall of fame in 2000, honored with a lifetime achievement award from UC Santa Barbara and was named Los Angeles Times Woman of the Year in 1975. Lynne Cox is a world-famous open-water swimmer and author of the bestselling book, Swimming to Antarctica, a chronicle of her swims across the Bering Strait, the English Channel, and one mile to the shores of Antarctica.

Yes, I did say that. She swam in 32 degree Antarctic waters without a wetsuit. Her latest book, Grayson, is the remarkable story of her experience swimming with a lost gray whale off the coast of California when she was just 17 years old. Lynne writes about her swimming experiences with an ease that many of us talk about walking the dog to the corner store. I'm so pleased to welcome Lynne Cox to Ocean Currents. Thank you for joining me, Lynne.

Lynne Cox:

My pleasure, Jennifer. Thank you.

Jennifer Stock: You started swimming pretty much as soon as you started walking. Do you have a memory that really sticks with you about your early water experiences?

Lynne Cox: I think it was when we were in Maine in summertime visiting our grandparents. My older brother, my two younger sisters and I would all swim in a place called Snow Pond, which is one of the Belgrade Lakes and I just remember that all of us are jumping in the water and starting to swim and our Dalmatian, Beth, saw us on the wharf and looked at us like, "Oh, no!" And so, she took this flying leap and jumped in the water and swam with us too.

So, it's always been sort of a family sport in the time that we've shared together.

Jennifer Stock: Is there a prerequisite in your family to tread water for an hour for family reunions to this day?

Lynne Cox: Exactly. Yeah, it's actually...our family reunions have been up in Maine on Lake St. George and it's sort of like that has been for years and years, the family tradition. So, if we're not on the water, we're absolutely beside it.

Jennifer Stock: That's wonderful. When you were 12, your family moved to California from New Hampshire to allow you and your siblings to train with top-notch coaches. You started swimming amongst some of the top swimmers in the country. At what point did you feel the boundaries of the pool and long for swimming long distances in open water?

Lynne Cox: Well, actually, as soon as I entered the pool at Long Beach, the Belmont Plaza, and started swimming there with a lot of Olympic swimmers from the U.S. and around the world. I realized I was really terrible at pool swimming and that, you know, that I'd go back and forth and I got stronger and I increased my pace and I swam the miles in the pool, but back then, and even now, there isn't a mile for women in the Olympic games and so, my coach, Don Gambriel, at the time was really a smart guy. He could look at different swimmers and tell their ability by just watching them and he knew that I had this ability to swim really long distances and so he said, "Why don't you think about swimming in the Seal Beach Roughwater Swim off the coast of southern California and just see how you do?"

And so, it was sort of like being let out of a cage and released out into the open sea and it was just wonderful because I think that, as a child growing up in New Hampshire and in Maine and swimming along the Atlantic coast and the lakes of Maine, this was w=sort of like going back home again. It was this sense of freedom that you don't get from following a black line and turning around at a wall and being in a heated, conditioned pool. It was sort of like you were out there in the open with the waves and the wind and the sunlight changes and you're all part of what's going on around you.

Jennifer Stock: At the young age of 15, you achieved your highest goal in life, crossing the English Channel and subsequently, breaking the world record and then did it again at age 16 and broke your record again. When did you transition from setting goals for personal achievement to setting new goals that would somehow effect the world?

Lynne Cox: Well, I think that that really happened when my dad and I were talking about what do you do after you swim the English Channel and you set the world record for women and men? What do you do after that? And I was sort of lost because it was sort of like, you know, at 16 you're going through a midlife crisis and now what do I do with the rest of my life, but he pulled a map of the world and said, "Look at the Bering Strait. Look at the United States and Soviet Union and see how close they are," and I looked at the map and I saw it was 76 miles and was like, "Dad, that's not very close," and he said, "Look closer," and in the middle of the map were two islands. One was Little Diomedes, which is the United States and the other was big Diomedes, which is Russian now, but was the Soviet Union and he said, "Why don't you think about swimming across because it's only 2.7 miles and so, I started thinking about, you know, maybe this could be a swim as a way to open the border between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

Maybe it's a swim that could promote peace between the two countries. Maybe it would change the way we look at each other because it's no longer a relationship between Washington DC and Moscow. It's like, we're neighbors. We're not distant countries. We're right next to each other and so I think that that became a really big focus for me and actually that was in 1976 when I was going to UC Santa Barbara and I was going to school and trying to figure out how could I get permission to do something like this swim and how could I organize it and how do I train to swim in 42 degree water in a bathing suit, bathing cap, and goggles and so, for the next 11 years, I'd start writing letters to Brezhnev, and

Chernenko, and Andropov, and Gorbachev and I'd start writing letters to senators and State Department people and all sorts of people trying to figure out how I could get permission to do it and how I could get support to do it because when you do something like this, you need to have boats around you and medical people and people to document that it actually really happened.

Jennifer Stock:

So, in 1987, about this swim in the Bering Sea, you swam from Alaska to Big Diomed Island in the Soviet Union and it took, as you wrote, two hours, six minutes, and 11 years. How did you feel when you reached the shores of the island?

Lynne Cox:

Very cold. I was...I mean, it was one of those unbelievable moments in life where you realize that what you've done really did have an impact in a great way and, you know, the border between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was opened for the first time in 48 years. Our Inuit guides in walrus-skin boats who went across with us were able to meet with family members from Siberia who've been ostracized there by the Soviets and they hadn't heard from them for 48 years and so, they were able to reconnect and, you know, when we landed on-shore and, you know, I stepped on the Russian shore, the Soviet shore back then, and had two Russian soldiers grab my arms and lift me out of the water and I heard them speaking Russian and I thought, "Oh my gosh! We really made it! We really did it."

You know, to have, for 11 years, in your mind this idea that the border could be opened and that something good could come out of that and then just the physicality of swimming in 42 degree waters that dropped to 38 degrees at the end, you know, you are really cold and you get colder when you stop swimming and then you're standing barefoot in the snow bank. So, the reality is that, you know, it was a sense of elation, but the reality, too, of being really, really, really cold.

Jennifer Stock:

So, let's talk about this cold water because this just still really blows my mind. I've read your books and I think about them because I'm a swimmer too, not quite to the extent you are, but I know where my cold is and then I read what the cold is that you're in and I'm just absolutely astounded by the length of time that you spend in this water and you've worked with some researchers and scientists that have studied your body and your adaptations to the cold water. What have they found through working with you?

Lynne Cox:

Well, there've been a number of different studies that I think the ones that really helped me learn a lot were when I went to UC

Santa Barbara, there was an Institute of Environmental Stress where there were a group of physiologists studying me there, but there was also a physiologist off of...physician William Keating from the University of London who is the world's expert in cold research and he found that I had a number of different things that allowed me to swim in cold water. One is that I'm able to close down the peripheral blood flow to the skin area and keep it closed down throughout the swim in cold water. I also have a very large muscle mass and so when I'm working out I create a lot of heat.

So, that helps to generate heat and then I have a very balanced layer of insulation, of body fat, that helps to keep me warm. I also work at between 70 and 80 percent of my maximum. So, I'm working really hard so that that helps to generate heat and I think, beyond all that, is really the mindset of that it can be done. When I was at UC Santa Barbara they started doing a series of studies on me and one of the things they found was that...I swam in a workout four hours in 50 degree water. What would be expected for the person who is untrained, they would swim that long, but for the untrained person, you would see a temperature, core temperature, internal temperature drop, in their body, but for me, my temperature went up to 102.2 degrees.

So, they realized that I've learned how to acclimate my body. The same thing, though, definitely applies when you start dropping the temperature lower and lower and lower and so, my goal when I swam much later was to be able to work at an even higher rate to try to heat my core temperature up and in some cases it worked, and in some cases it was like, we still need to work harder at this.

Jennifer Stock:

You're listening to Ocean Currents and I'm talking with Lynne Cox, an open water swimmer and the author of two books, *Swimming to Antarctica* and most recently, *Grayson*. Lynne, after your achievements crossing the English Channel twice, breaking records, starting the Bering Sea swim and starting to realize some of the larger implications of what you could do as a swimmer, what drew you to swim in even colder waters, training for a swim where penguins zip around and leopard seals lurk in the Antarctic Sea?

Lynne Cox:

I guess that I'm really curious about what human beings are able to do and for myself, I really wanted to stretch myself. I felt like I had done a series of swims that were first, about breaking records, then about trying to be first, then about cold water research and then about opening borders between countries. There were a whole series of swims that I did after the Bering Strait that focused on getting two countries that were not working together to work

together with their Navies to help me do something. So, that was a great thing to do that, but I really want...at least that's what I thought, but then I wanted to do something that would push me beyond what I'd done and also something that we could learn more about cold and how people acclimate to the cold water and what goes on physiologically.

So, I was talking to a friend I met named Caroline Alexander who had been on the U.S. pentathlete team, but she was also a writer and she's written a number of books. One was about Shackelton called *Endurance* and it was a book about his trying to be the first explorer to reach the South Pole before Scott and as it turns out, he got locked on the ice for nine months in Antarctica, but because of his leadership, he and his group survived. So, Caroline and I were talking one day about what I was planning to do next and I really wasn't excited about something. I was looking at different possibilities, looking at something that would be challenging, politically opening doors, something that would, you know, capture my imagination and, you know, I couldn't think of anything that would be worth really training hard for and also focusing on and so, Caroline said, "Well, why don't you think about Elephant Island," and I said, "Sub-Antarctica?"

She said, "Yeah, that's where Shackelton had landed when he was leaving Antarctica and getting him and his crew rescued," and I thought about it and I said, "Well, what's the water temperature there," and she said, "35 degrees," and I said, "Hmm."

I said, "Well, he's been there. I think I'd rather go somewhere where he hasn't been." I said, "What's the water like off Antarctica in the summertime." She said, "32 degrees." She's like, "No, Lynne. You can't swim in 32 degree water," and I thought, "Maybe I could. How could I do that," and then I started to think, "Well, maybe I could swim 500 yards," and then, "Well, maybe I'd have to swim in a wetsuit," and then I thought, "Well, if I swim in a wetsuit then that's reducing the ability of the human being. You're using technology instead of what you have inside you to do it. Ok, then so, how can you do this?"

So, that's what happened. For the next two years I started trying to figure out how could I train, how could I do it, who could I get as support crew and the idea just sort of grew inside me and I kept working toward with the idea of swimming, not 500 yards in a wetsuit, but a mile in 32 degree water in a bathing suit cap and goggles.

Jennifer Stock:

It's amazing. You know, one thing I was...we were talking earlier about some of the adaptations in the studies that were done, your body, and finding that you have a really perfect mix of all of these adaptations to deal with the cold, but you still have the mental thing. You wanted to block out those worries and those fears just so you could do it, but did you ever worry that even if you weren't working hard to break down those fears that maybe your body would not be able to survive it?

Lynne Cox:

Oh, yeah. Actually, when I hit the water I thought, "Oh my gosh. This is really cold and this is really hard." You know, because you hit the water and, you know, what normally happens to anyone when they hit really cold water, they start hyperventilating and their adrenaline shoots through their body and their heart starts beating really fast and so, this is what's going on as I'm swimming in 32 degree water. The other thing that goes on that can be really dangerous is that you have a nerve in your nose called the vagus nerve and if you overstimulate it, you can go into cardiac arrest instantly.

It's called "sudden death syndrome." So, one of the reasons why I jumped in from this dive ladder attached to the ship, jumped in, instead of dived in was because I wanted to try to absorb the cold shock through my body before my face hit and the next thing was to swim like a water polo player with my head up to try to keep my face out of the water and to contain my body heat. You lose 80 percent of heat through your head.

So, the idea was that if I could swim head-up, maybe I could keep the core, the center part of my body that is really important to keep that high, keep the temperature up longer. So, that was the thinking behind it, but the reality is as you hit this 32 degree water that you're thinking, "You know what, this really does feel like liquid ice and I'm really having a hard time here and I can't say words because I'm breathing so hard and my arms are turning over very, very quickly," because the idea is to generate heat through muscle activity. So, and I'm trying not to kick very hard, but at the same time, I need some kicking to support my upper body so I can keep my head out of the water because if you kick your feet really hard then what you're doing is you're taking the core blood in the center of your body and you're moving it down to your toes and your feet, which is then causing it to be exposed to cooler water.

So, in my head, there are many, many things going on and so, if you focus on what you can't do and why you can't, you won't make it, but if you keep focusing on, "Ok, I'm moving my arms. The

boat's right there. They're watching me," and you focus on even little, every little bit of progress, then it makes it much more doable, but once your mind starts to stray and once you have doubts, then you're out of there. So, this swim when I was in Antarctica was so challenging because I knew that I couldn't stop for a moment because the water was 32 degrees and that water rips the warmth away from your body 25 to 30 times faster than air. So, it was like all of these things are going on as far as what's going on physiologically, but also, this understanding that you are really jumping into the unknown and for the most...or when you take an untrained person and you drop them into very cold water, like below 40 degrees, there's a researcher up at the University of Canada that explained to me that for up to 6 to 8 minutes, an untrained person will seize up in the water.

Their brain will send a signal to their muscles to say, "Move," and the receptors don't pick it up. They're numbed and so the people will just seize up and can't move in the water, but because I had conditioned and I trained and I had swum in Ushuaia, Argentina in 40 degrees then I did a test swim in Sub-Antarctica around King George Island, I was able to realize that, "Ok, this is possible. It can be done."

Jennifer Stock:

So, a couple of years before, I'm not sure exactly the timeline, before Antarctica, you did a swim in the Nile River and recently I read that you've been involved with swims to bring awareness to the health of rivers and watersheds for recreational purposes. How did your experience swimming in the polluted Nile river race affect you for the long-term.

Lynne Cox:

Oh, it was actually a really, really difficult swim because I had been invited as the only American to swim in this race in the Nile River and I had no idea that the Nile River was extremely polluted and I had also been told by a man who...Fahmmy Attallah, who had helped me train for the English Channel because he had tried it five times, the Egyptian swimmer, he tried to swim the English Channel and had made it across, but he had so much background knowledge and so he was my friend's friend and lived in California and he was about 60 years older than me...I mean, 40, whatever, he was quite a bit older than me and I would go and learn from him and so I had asked him about swimming the Nile River and he said, "It will be beautiful. You will have a wonderful time. It'll be the experience of your lifetime."

But, he had left 16 years prior to it and the water conditions in the Nile River were just awful. Basically, I don't think it's changed. It may have, but as far as I know, the raw sewage from millions of people and the chemical sewage is just directly dumped into the river and we were also told that it would be ok to drink the tap water and it wasn't ok. So, after being sick for ten days, I was let loose to swim this race in the Nile and basically passed out after 15 miles and wound up in the hospital. So, it made me really attuned to water conditions, even more than ever before and how environmental...how people affect, in a huge way, affect the environment, the water environment and then recently, I think it was in June, a group called Rivers Unlimited and the Sierra Club in Cincinnati, Ohio and the Kentucky area contacted me and asked me if I would do a swim across the Ohio River because they wanted to bring attention to the need to keep the water quality standards on the Ohio River high.

Apparently, in 1996, they were supposed to put in water treatment facilities to handle the sewage so that it wouldn't be dumped into the river, but when it rains really hard all of the sewage spills over directly into the river and so the water gets really contaminated and all of the recreational activities have to be stopped and it's just not good for the communities...because a lot of the local people get their drinking water from the river. So, this group, these two groups asked if I'd come back there and do this swim and I said, "Sure if I can do it with some local swimmers as a way to bring a focal point instead of just me coming in there and saying, 'You need to do this.'"

And so, as a result of this whole thing the powers that be decided that they would maintain the water quality standards on the river and hopefully now they'll figure out how to put in the water treatment facilities.

Jennifer Stock:

Well, that's fantastic and in both books, the way you write about swimming, you seem to have a spiritual connection with the ocean and with swimming itself. What is the specific draw for you to the water?

Lynne Cox:

I think that the water makes me feel weightless, almost buoyant and if you ask any swimmer, there's sort of this effervescence that comes off of them. They sort of bubble when they talk. Not every swimmer, but, you know, there's just a sense of being free and moving through the water and being buoyant and being alive and there's nothing more beautiful, I don't think, than being immersed in the open water in the ocean or in a lake and being surrounded by

nature and for me, I just love the sense of wonder, of discovery, of realizing that you're moving almost through a different country, in a way, where you are the guest and so I sort of look at it through those eyes when I'm swimming to realize that I'm here for a short amount of time, but I want to learn as much as I can from being out here and being a part of it.

Jennifer Stock: That's wonderful. So, those of you listening, we're talking with Lynne Cox, open-water swimmer, author of *Swimming to Antarctica* and *Grayson*. We're going to take a short break and we'll be back in a minute.

(Music)

Jennifer Stock: Alright. I'm talking with Lynne Cox, open water swimmer, and we're going to start talking a little bit about your most recent book, Lynne. After all your accomplishments in the swimming world and the success of your first book, *Swimming to Antarctica*, what drove you to write your second book that recalls a training swim you did off the coast of California when you were 17?

Lynne Cox: I think that the story was in me for so long, this idea that, you know, swimming offshore and I had a baby whale who was swimming around me and at the time I didn't realize that I just knew I had somebody big beside me and swimming around. So, I had that sense of story, but the reality of it and wanting to tell it, but I wasn't sure how to tell it because I didn't, I really didn't know the form for it and at first I thought, you know, maybe I should write a story that's a color book for kids that tells the story of *Grayson* and I thought some more about it and I realized that there's so much more philosophy and depth that I can give this story if I tell it as a story reflecting back now 30 years later on that moment in time and one of the ideas was that you have moments in life where you're called upon to either stretch yourself and do something or step back from it and so I incorporated some philosophy into this story that people would get the sense that, you know, there's more to it than just what meets the eye on the surface and I also wanted to really talk about how amazing gray whales are and what it is like to be in the water with one.

Jennifer Stock: When you...this is...you were swimming, you had just finished about an hour swim, you were getting to the point of, "Okay. I'm ready to get out. I'm hungry. I'm getting cold," and then you realize there's this dark luminous shadow before you, or below you, and it wasn't a shark, it wasn't a spaceship as you described as the size or

a sea lion, but a baby whale. What was your first thought? Had you ever seen a gray whale before while you were swimming?

Lynne Cox:

No, I'd never seen a gray whale while I was swimming and actually I still didn't know until I got back to the pier where there was an old fisherman named Steve who ran the bait shop who told me that I had a baby gray whale swimming around me because I knew there was something in the water. I could feel it moving. I could feel the water hollow out underneath me and I could feel my hair on my arms standing on end because it was so scary that there was something so large and I kept looking for a fin. I kept looking for a dorsal fin that would tell me it was either a dolphin or a shark and I couldn't see that and it wasn't until I found out from Steve that, "Well, gee. Gray whales don't have dorsal fins. They have, like, dimples on their backs."

And so, that's why I couldn't distinguish what was swimming beside me and once I realized it was a baby gray whale it was like, "That's amazing," and that he was swimming over to me was even more amazing. So, there was a sense of wonder, but also this little, baby gray whale was all of 18 feet long or so and so there's a sense of, you know, is it going to be okay to swim near this being or, you know, will he be afraid of me, or could he hurt me? And so, you know, there's a sense of...how do you balance that, between curiosity and not getting hurt?

Jennifer Stock:

And Steve had been watching up on the pier and watching it follow...or be along with you for a while. How long do you actually think it was with you before you really realized it?

Lynne Cox:

Well, I know that when I had swum down to the jetty on the north side of the Seal Beach Pier and that he had been, the baby gray whale, had been swimming around me because that's when I first felt this huge presence and felt the water change and shift and felt myself being dragged along because when you swim in the water, if you have somebody swimming very close who's a lot faster or stronger, or larger than you, you get this draft off of them or drag like you would off of the back of a bicycle and so I felt this thing pulling me along and knew that there was something there, but I couldn't tell what it was and so, again the sense of, you know, do you get out of the water right now or do you try to get closer to shore and maintain your sensibility and not get scared, but at the same time it could be a white shark. I mean, there are white sharks off the coast of Catalina. There are white sharks that go along the coast and so, I'd never heard of one and never heard of anyone sighting one along the coast of Seal Beach or further south, but still,

you know, just because nobody has ever seen it doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

So, I didn't feel very comfortable for that first half mile or that half mile swim and when I got back to the pier was when Steve explained that he had seen this baby whaling swimming with me and he was really the old sage that could put his hand in the water and tell you not only what temperature it was precisely, but which way the current was moving and how fast it was going and everything like that. So, when he told me this information about the gray whale, I just totally believed what he had to tell me.

Jennifer Stock: What made you decide that you needed to stay with it?

Lynne Cox: Well, you know, I was 17 years old and Steve said to me, "The baby whale lost its mom and if you go ashore, he'll follow you and he could go aground and die." So, because Steve was who he was, I believed him and I just thought, "Well, maybe if I stay with him, maybe I can help him find his mom," but when you're 17 years old, you don't right away think, "This is the Pacific Ocean and how do you find a gray mother whale?" It always drives me crazy...as you spent hours out there on the water looking for a gray whale mom.

Jennifer Stock: Why did you stay out there for the hours that you did? There were a lot of questions going on while you were out there.

Lynne Cox: I think that I felt like I couldn't abandon the baby whale. I mean, if I find a lost dog in the neighborhood, I will try to find out who the owner is and actually I know...but, I just can't, I couldn't not try and I felt like I had to do something and I think that by pursuing this and getting, you know, it just wasn't me. There were fishermen who were out there by this...after 3 or 4 or 5 hours, they were all looking. There were people that were lifeguards in Seal Beach and Long Beach that were looking. There were people on board larger ships that were going out along the channel. There were people on the pier who were watching to see if they could sight the mother.

So, I didn't feel like I was really out there alone with this baby whale. I felt like there were other people who really cared and who were really trying and I don't know, I just, I think that I also had to have that sense of hope that we could succeed at this and I think that this whole experience was really deeply rewarding for me to realize that, you know, we can make a difference, we can have an impact and it made me realize, you know, this little instance makes you...when you realize you can do something and you can affect change in a good way, it makes you realize that you do have your

own sense of ability and power and you can do something and so to realize that when you're 17 years old is big deal, you know?

Jennifer Stock: Yeah. When you're out there and you're committed and you were really becoming close to this whale and feeling a connection with it...there were a couple of times the whale disappeared for a while and what did you think had happened to it and did you feel maybe that it found its mom and now my time is over? It's hard to have closure with an experience like that when the whale just goes off.

Lynne Cox: Right and that was the big wonder. It's like, "Well, did he find his mom?" You know, "Is she back now? Did he dive down and hear her and find her or were there other whales in the area that communicated to him that mom's on the way," or...you know, he just suddenly disappeared and so, I sort of floated on the surface of this very deep water and felt very exposed to all sorts of stuff underneath and I'm thinking, "Do I wait? Do I go? What do I do," and so, I kept thinking, "Well, I can't just go because I don't know what's happened," and so, I decided that I would wait and I thought, that was the big question, you know. How long do you wait for something in life?

When is it time to move on and when is it time to give up and when do you wait a little longer and so it's only by waiting and thinking it through that you get the answer and so I was out there floating around and wondering and so, at some point I decided that I was really getting cold and I really needed to start heading back to shore because when you start to go into hypothermia, your core temperature starts dropping and you become as if you're inebriated and then you can go into cardiac arrest eventually and so, I started feeling very cold and started thinking, "Well, you know, I don't feel like I can do anything more. I need to go back in."

Jennifer Stock: Another wonderful thing about Grayson is while you're encountering all of this, you're not just with the whale, but you're also encountering all sorts of other local wildlife that are common in southern California and you include a lot of natural history information about the shoreline, the perspective from the water to the shore, the marine life like the grunion and the sting rays and the ocean sunfish, garibaldi...Do you enjoy encountering all of these animals on your swims or do they ever distract you from doing what you need to do while you're out there?

Lynne Cox: Oh, I am so happy to be out there among them. You know, the sense of going in and working out and sort of putting blinders on and going back and forth as fast as I can, I'm thinking, "Why

bother?" You can do that at a swimming pool and you probably want to do that in the swimming pool because there's nothing to see other than your friend, swimmers, which is nice, but it's not all that...always inspiring and so, to be out in the water and to be encountering the garibaldi and seeing them swim and seeing how they move and seeing their efficiency and thinking that they have teeth and realizing that they could bite you. You sort of go, "Oh, okay I won't get too close to your nest," but, you know, just the sense of how fish move through the water and that they're over near you and also, the sense that you are moving through this amazing environment that's constantly changing and you're changing your stroke as you move through it, you're changing your breathing patterns, if the waves get too big you're adjusting to what's happening around you and then you also realize that, you know, especially at night, you're swimming through phytoplankton or zooplankton and you're watching the light, the whole ocean sort of sparkle off your fingertips as you move through the water...through the phosphorescence and, you know, it's amazing to be out there and suddenly see this great big sunfish floating on the surface of the water and realizing they propel themselves through the water by spitting water.

It's like, you think, "Well, gee. I wish we could do that as kids." So, there's a sense of magic and awe and wonder and on other swims that I've done, like across the Catalina Channel, I remember swimming at night and the lights were on the boats and there were flying fish that leapt out of the water and flew across and sometimes into the boat itself, but as they flew out of the water, the light would hit them and they would turn into something out of a Disney movie where they were like, hot pinks and blues and turquoise colors and just absolutely magical and I think that, you know, by going in the ocean you actually put yourself in a real magical place where you never know what's going to happen next and it's sort of like entering the best book you've ever entered. You know, it's wonderful and at times, though, when you're training for something it's just really methodical as well where you're just going, "Okay I'm moving my arms. I'm working out. I'm focusing," but the distraction of what's around you makes it more interesting than just doing a workout.

Jennifer Stock:

What would you recommend for those of us who may not have those types of memorable encounters in the wilderness to foster the kind of relationship and appreciation for nature that you've experienced such as swimming with this baby gray whale that you called Grayson and all the other animals that you've seen. How can

other people...how would you relate for them to create this appreciation?

Lynne Cox: I think that it all starts really beginning on walking along the beach, maybe gathering sea glass or maybe seashells and just looking at...with wonder about what's around you. I remember as a kid when we were in Maine, one of the things we used to do before we were really good swimmers was that we would go in the tide pools and look at the anemone and, I think they were anemone back then...I remember the periwinkles and the little clams that attached limpets that would attach themselves to the rocks and just the sense of being closer to the ocean because not all people are ocean lovers. They're land-lovers first, but there is this magic of just standing on the beach looking out at the water and watching the waves rise and fall and seeing the crests break and become foam and just hearing the sounds of the ocean and feeling that you're in a totally different place and...where you are among, you know, big change.

Jennifer Stock: In your career as a swimmer encountering different regions and cultures around the world, did you observe a variance in ocean or watershed ethics in regards to conservation?

Lynne Cox: Wow, that's a big question. Yes, I think that, you know, my sensibility about the ocean is that there are certain areas where there is lots of interest in conserving it or improving the condition of the area and I've seen that, for instance, like in Santa Monica Bay, at one period of time it was maybe...and I don't know the dates specifically, but maybe in the 80's or 90's, the bay was really awful and that may be inaccurate, but I remember there was a period of time when I was swimming off there where the water...you could tell it was becoming more and more polluted and there were dead fish in the water and all of that and I know that there's this huge effort now to clean up the bay and I think that just because people....people do become aware of their situation by walking on the beach, by swimming in the water because they're immersed in what's going on around them and then they realize that they can impact it.

I mean, the Surfriders Association down in Huntington Beach, I know that those surfers are really aware of what's happening with the water conditions and I think that, you know, governmentally people are more aware because the water is tested to make sure the quality is at a certain level, but I think that we still have to figure out how not to have an adverse impact on it and I think the other part of the story is that we have so many people who are so smart

that can come up with solutions and I think that that's where we have to focus now.

Jennifer Stock: And how about...is there one thing you would like to relate to listeners about their personal role in protecting the ocean?

Lynne Cox: Well, I think that, you know, everyone has a different ability and everyone has different knowledge and everyone has different experiences and I think that the idea is that...figure out what you'd like to do. Figure out what you can do and then figure out a group that you want to be connected with to help have an impact on conserving or maintaining or helping to foster growth within the ocean or along the shores along the salt marshes and don't let them become developed. You know, things like that that they...people realize that they can have an impact in whatever way that their abilities draw them to.

Jennifer Stock: Is there anything, any last words you might have for listeners? How can readers...or listeners and readers stay current on what you're doing now?

Lynne Cox: Actually, I have a website: lynnecox.org and that pretty much gives the book tours or the lecture tours...not the lecture tours, but I do corporate lectures too and though I have listed basically what I've done and then as I do the next project, I'll probably start listing what's going on with that.

Jennifer Stock: Wonderful. Thank you. On this show I typically host topics that highlight marine life and research, but after reading Lynne's book...remember humans are as much a part of the ocean too; recreating, making a living, benefitting from biodiversity, and in Lynne's case, creating history and being a positive example to so many including political leaders. In many ways, the grace of which Lynne approaches personal challenges are wonderful examples of how to apply conservation ethics amongst all of the different ocean users and stakeholders to look for innovative approaches in preserving our oceans. So, Lynne, I want to thank you so much for sharing your stories and your books with us. You're really a wonderful example of human spirit.

Lynne Cox: Thank you very, very much, Jennifer. It's been a great pleasure.

Jennifer Stock: If you ever find yourself up here in the north bay above San Francisco and would like to cross the San Andreas fault swimming, let us know, we'd love to have you up here.

Lynne Cox: I'd love to go for a swim with you. That would be a blast.

Jennifer Stock: Tomales Bay is beautiful place to swim.

(Music)