

Nature's insight into what makes scientists tick.

Summarize yourself in the form of a title of a paper in Nature.

Longitudinal single case study documents instance of a scientist 'making it' notwithstanding apparent lack of key skills.

What was your first experiment as a child?

I built many contraptions, including model airplanes that actually flew; in fact, I was very good with my hands. But it was books that peopled my world, even when I was small.

Who has been the most important mentor in your career?

My German adviser Gotthilf Hempel. He was politically conservative and me insufferably leftist (to the point of never calling him 'Professor'), but he supported me through thick and thin. He was a true *Doktorvater*.

Whose graduate student would you most like to have been (historical impossibility notwithstanding)?

Charles Darwin. In fact, we've just finished a book together — *Darwin's Fishes* — to which he contributed about a third of the text.

What single event changed your career path?

The sudden realization, while on a research trawler in the Java Sea in 1975, that we would never be able to make sense of the hundreds of species of multicoloured fish wiggling on our sorting deck using the approaches applied in Europe for studying cod or plaice, and which had formed the core of my studies as a fisheries scientist.

What book has been most influential in your scientific career?

Leftist political tracts swirling about in the 1960s, which convinced me that I should study something that would 'serve the people', rather than indulge in my literary, historical and philosophical interests. As it turned out, I was able to do it all.

What gives you the most job satisfaction now?

Interacting with the creative, hardworking colleagues I have coaxed into joining the Sea Around Us project (see www.saup.fisheries.ubc.ca).

What are your major frustrations?

I failed to convince anyone of the usefulness of the neat theory I developed in my dissertation of 1979. I showed that oxygen availability to tissues is usually the limiting factor in the growth of fish and water-breathing invertebrates, which explains the key features of their growth, reproduction and distribution much more elegantly than the hypotheses that still prevail today. Twenty years of preaching and writing on this have gotten me nowhere, although I think this is the best work I ever did.



Daniel Pauly

Daniel Pauly is professor of fisheries at the Fisheries Centre, Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. He has no hobbies to speak of, and he reads when he does not write.

What literary character would you employ as a postdoc?

Sherlock Holmes. I would put him in charge of that part of our project devoted to tracking, quantifying and mapping illegal fisheries catches.

What's your favourite conference destination, and why?

Downtown Vancouver, because I can go there without flying and without being randomly searched at every airport.

What was the worst/most memorable comment you ever received from a referee?

"It may be true in the Tropics, but not here!" I can't remember where this came from, but Alan Longhurst and I followed up on some of its implications in *Ecology of Tropical Oceans*, a book we published in 1987.

What book is currently on your bedside table?

Steven Pinker's *The Blank Slate*. I had serious doubts before I started this book that the human brain starts as a *tabula rasa*, which is what we all believed in the 1960s. Pinker showed that I can abandon this erroneous belief and still be a good person.

What music heads the playlist in your car or lab?

Aretha Franklin's.

What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

"Any scientist who wants to make important

discoveries must study an important problem" — Peter Medawar in *Advice to a Young Scientist*.

Assuming the dead can be raised and/or time travel exists, who from the world outside science would you most like to have dinner with?

Circe.

Where and when would you most liked to have lived or worked?

Subtract a few decades and I, as a black person, could not have been an academic anywhere. So I much prefer the present.

What one thing would you rescue from your burning laboratory?

Nothing. Let it all burn.

What do you most dislike about having research published?

Finding that I could now do the same work much better, but the publication holds it in the past, and that is where people find it.

The Internet is the bane of scientists' lives because...

People expect prompt answers to their e-mails, and you spend the best part of your day working for them. If you don't, they think you have become too full of yourself.

What would you have become, if not a scientist?

Another scientist. Seriously. This is the best.

What single discovery, invention or innovation would most improve your life?

An intelligent, voice-activated spreadsheet for the office, and an exercise machine that does for me the exercise I should be doing.

Name one extravagance you can now get away with because of your eminence.

Not knowing or not being able to do something, saying so loud and clear, and having people still think I do.

What music would you have played at your funeral?

Aretha Franklin's *R.E.S.P.E.C.T.*

How would you like to be remembered?

As the one who showed that the effect of fisheries on marine life is equivalent to that of a large meteor strike on terrestrial life.

What's just around the corner?

A representation of global ocean ecosystems that we immodestly call 'World Model', contrasting the structure of present marine ecosystems, and their fish biomass, with those of the 1950s. This should help to settle the issue of fisheries impacts, as well as providing a solid framework for discussions about future global fish supply as required, for example, by the United Nations-sponsored Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. ■