



Interview with Award Winner Professor Erik Bonsdorff

3rd April 2019

- **Briefly tell about yourself. What road have you travelled to get where you are now?**

My personal interest in the Baltic Sea and its coastal and archipelago waters stem from my childhood and youth in the archipelago of SW Finland – fishing tours and birdwatching excursions. The urge to and need for active engagement in environmental issues came early in connection with proposed large-scale industrial establishments in my home region; participating in and learning from civil action the led me into marine and environmental science. My scientific career spans over 40 years, and the issues at hand have naturally changed and developed in parallel with how the Baltic Sea ecosystem has responded to human mismanagement of the marine resources.

- **What has been your driving force, inspiration and motivation in the work for the Baltic Sea and the environment?**

The prime source of inspiration has been – and will always be – the serenity and beauty of our archipelago and coastal seas. To see this vulnerable ecosystem suffer from human shortsightedness and egocentricity is a strong driving force for me. I feel a need for and will to contribute to a successful improvement of the environmental status of our common Baltic Sea, for the sake of the Sea itself, its ecosystems and inhabitants, and for us, for our children and grandchildren. I want to be proud of our efforts and of the Sea when I one day take my granddaughter out to the archipelago that has inspired me so much.

- **What has, in your own opinion, the highlight and biggest successes of your career?**

I think the main thing I have done for the Baltic Sea and its environment is a combination of several factors and activities, always based on solid scientific findings and with a keen ear for the wellbeing of the Sea. I have had the advantage to be able to train, tutor and work with students and young scientists who forward the work and our science-based message, and I do hope I have been able to inspire both fellow scientists and the general public by communicating knowledge and information for the benefit of positive environmental decision-making at home and abroad.

- **What is your finest Baltic Sea memory?**

“My finest memory from the Baltic Sea” is actually a sum of a long chain of memories, all linked to the beauty and tranquility that only our archipelago and open sea can provide. It is a sum of childhood memories from fishing tours and birdwatching, of being alone listening to the voices of nature, and of being together with students, colleagues, family and friends, of seeing the Sea from the deck of a ship or from a small open boat. And in later years also having the positive experience of people accepting and learning from the oftentimes very critical scenarios I as a scientist have to convey to society – that gives, after all, a sense of hope for a brighter future for the Baltic Sea!