

AUTHOR PRESS KIT

Stories from the Sea

The books, life, and legacy of

Paul L. Sieswerda Sr.

IN MEMORIAM · MARINE BIOLOGIST · AUTHOR · CURATOR

For interviews, signings, classroom visits, and review copies:

Press contact · PJ Sieswerda · paul_j@gothamwhale.org

Site · sieswerdastories.com

Gotham Whale · gothamwhale.org

sieswerdastories.com

Two books, fifty years *with the sea.*

Paul L. Sieswerda Sr. spent more than fifty years in the company of marine mammals — from his early days as a young volunteer at the New England Aquarium in Boston, through curatorial roles at the New York Aquarium on Coney Island, to founding Gotham Whale, the New York City nonprofit that has helped document the extraordinary return of humpback whales to New York Harbor.

His two children’s books — *Big Whale, Big City* and *A Seal in the Bathtub* — distill that lifetime of fieldwork, teaching, and storytelling into picture-book form for young readers and their families.

Quick facts

50+ years

In the company of marine mammals

2 picture books

Both Level 2 readers, illustrated

Founder

Of Gotham Whale (NYC nonprofit)

Reading age

4 – 12, family read-aloud

New York Harbor

Site of his life’s last great chapter

Best Publishing Co.

Publisher of both titles

PRESS CONTACT

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Press kit, signed books, school visits, podcast bookings, classroom resources.

Paul L. Sieswerda Sr.

MARINE BIOLOGIST · AUTHOR · CURATOR

Paul Sieswerda Sr. spent more than fifty years in the company of marine mammals. He began as a young volunteer at the New England Aquarium in Boston, where he was rapidly promoted to Curator of Fishes and Mammals, and eventually went on to serve as Curator of the New York Aquarium on Coney Island.

Paul was the founder of Gotham Whale, a nonprofit dedicated to the study, education, and advocacy of the whales, dolphins, and seals of New York Harbor. Today, his son PJ Sieswerda carries that legacy forward as Executive Director.



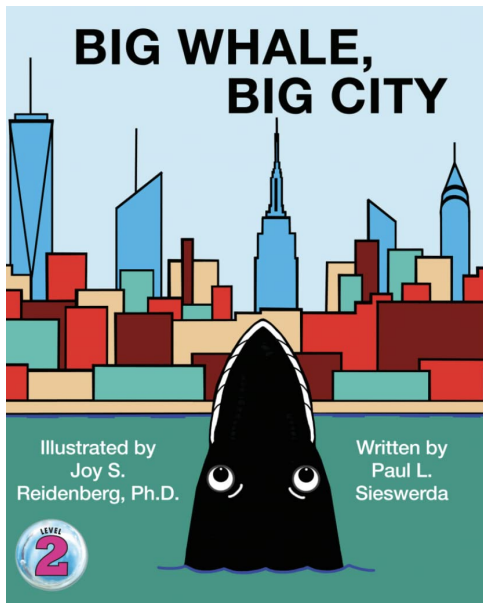
Paul’s work helped document the extraordinary return of humpback whales to the waters around New York City — a conservation story his books continue to share with readers of every age.

Paul was also the author of *Sharks (Animal Ways)*, and his writing, teaching, and fieldwork continue to bring the wonder of the sea to a new generation.

“With salt still on his boots, Paul brought a half-century of fieldwork home to the page — so a new generation might learn to look at the sea, and see it back.”

Big Whale, Big City

Written by Paul L. Sieswerda · Illustrated by Joy S. Reidenberg, Ph.D.



A picture-book love letter to the humpback whales of New York Harbor.

Once upon a time, the whales of New York were thought to be gone forever. But for the first time in over a century, these gentle giants are feeding and breaching within sight of the Manhattan skyline — and Jerry’s story is the story of all of them.

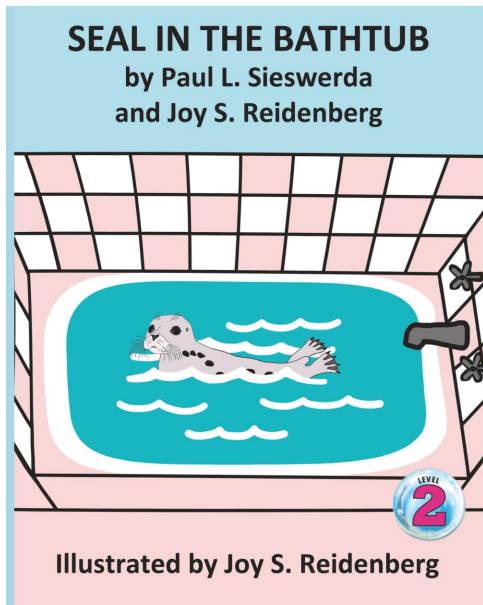
With lyrical writing and anatomically true illustrations, this children’s picture book teaches young readers about a whale’s life, how humpbacks feed, the challenges they face, and why the ocean around the world’s greatest city has become a new home for the largest animals on earth.

FORMAT	READING AGE	READING LEVEL	PAGES
Paperback Picture Book	5 – 10 years	Level 2	52
ISBN-13	PUBLISHER	PUBLISHED	CATEGORY
978-1947239395	Best Publishing Company	November 16, 2021	Nature · Picture Book

Available on Amazon — amazon.com/Big-Whale-City-Paul-Sieswerda/dp/1947239392

A Seal in the Bathtub

By Paul L. Sieswerda Sr. and Joy S. Reidenberg, Ph.D. · Illustrated by Joy S. Reidenberg, Ph.D. · Contributing Author: PJ Sieswerda



The true, tender story of how one small creature changed a young biologist's life.

Before he became a curator, before the whales of New York, Paul Sieswerda Sr., then in his twenties, carried a tiny orphaned harbor seal home from a Boston beach — certain he'd feed the pup through the night and return him to the aquarium the next day.

Instead, the seal stayed. He slept in the bathtub. He paddled in a kiddie pool. He became “Cecil” to the family and a character at birthday parties. *A Seal in the Bathtub* is the true, tender story of how one small creature changed a young biologist's life — and set him on a path that would span five decades of caring for the ocean.

FORMAT	READING AGE	READING LEVEL	PAGES
Paperback (Illustrated Memoir) — 12 years		Level 2	44
ISBN-13	PUBLISHER	PUBLISHED	CATEGORY
978-0941332453	Best Publishing Company	March 6, 2026	Memoir · Nature

Available on Amazon — amazon.com/Seal-Bathtub-Paul-L-Sieswerda/dp/0941332454

In Paul's *own words.*

From an interview with Paul L. Sieswerda Sr., recounted in A Seal in the Bathtub. The original quote is preserved here as a tribute.

“I brought him home thinking I would feed him overnight and return him to the aquarium the next day. The next day was the next day, and the day after that, and one of the most extraordinary chapters of our family’s life. Cecil slept in the bathtub. He paddled in a kiddie pool. He came to birthday parties.

He taught me, before any classroom did, that wonder doesn’t live behind glass. It lives in the small, breathing, briny moments — the ones that change a young biologist’s life forever, and send him off to spend the next fifty years caring for the ocean.”

— Paul L. Sieswerda Sr.

CONTRIBUTING AUTHOR

Carrying the legacy forward.

PJ Sieswerda.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GOTHAM WHALE · UNDERWATER EXPLORER



Paul Sr. (right) and his son PJ (left) photographing whales together off New York Harbor.

PJ Sieswerda grew up by the water, in the wake of his father's curiosity. After his own years exploring the oceans — diving and photographing in the Bahamas, the British Virgin Islands, the Red Sea, Micronesia, and Belize — PJ now carries his father's work forward as Executive Director of Gotham Whale, the nonprofit Paul Sr. founded to study, educate, and advocate for the whales, dolphins, and seals of New York Harbor.

He lives close to the same shores his father loved, with his family — Cannon, Emery, and his namesake Paul — and contributed to A Seal in the Bathtub alongside his father.

Themes & talking points.

Sieswerda's books touch on a wide range of themes for journalists, podcasters, educators, and booksellers — from urban wildlife and ocean conservation to memoir, family, and the long arc of a life lived close to the sea.

- **Urban whales of New York Harbor**

The unlikely return of humpbacks to the waters around Manhattan — a conservation success story unfolding within sight of the skyline.

- **A career across two great aquariums**

From the New England Aquarium to the New York Aquarium on Coney Island — a half-century of curatorial work and care for marine mammals.

- **Paul founded Gotham Whale**

The nonprofit Paul Sr. founded to study, educate, and advocate for the whales, dolphins, and seals of New York Harbor — now led by his son PJ.

- **Father, son, and the sea**

Two generations of marine work, photography, and conservation — a story of inheritance, mentorship, and continuity.

- **Children's books rooted in real lives**

Both titles are anchored in lived experience — Cecil the seal in the bathtub, Jerry the humpback off New York. True stories, illustrated for young readers.

- **Memoir for the picture-book set**

A Seal in the Bathtub is an illustrated memoir for ages 4 – 12 — a rare format that brings true family history into a child's reading life.

- **Reading Level 2 · family read-aloud**

Both books carry the Level 2 reading-level badge — well-suited to early independent readers and to family read-aloud time.

Story angles & booking.

PJ Sieswerda, contributing author and Executive Director of Gotham Whale, is available to speak with journalists, educators, and event hosts. Below are story angles drawn directly from the books.

1. **The whale next door.**

How humpbacks returned to New York City — and what their presence tells us about the harbor’s recovery.

2. **A seal, a bathtub, a biologist.**

The Cecil story behind *A Seal in the Bathtub* — the moment a young Paul Sieswerda Sr. was set on his lifelong path.

3. **Two generations on the water.**

Father and son: a curator-author and an underwater explorer turned executive director. Continuity, mentorship, and family.

4. **Picture books as conservation.**

Why true stories told to children matter — and how Sieswerda’s books move from the waterline into classrooms.

5. **The legacy of Gotham Whale.**

How a small NYC nonprofit became a documentation engine for the harbor’s most charismatic megafauna — and what comes next.

6. **A life beneath the surface.**

PJ’s own diving and photography across the Bahamas, the BVI, the Red Sea, Micronesia, and Belize — a counterpoint to his father’s shore-based work.

TO BOOK AN INTERVIEW

PJ Sieswerda · paul_j@gothamwhale.org

Available for podcasts, radio, school visits, classroom Zooms, and bookstore events. NYC-area in-person preferred.

CONTACT & RESOURCES

How to reach us.

Sieswerda Stories is the home of Paul L. Sieswerda Sr.'s books, maintained on his behalf by his son PJ — with photographs, full reading-group resources, and links to retailers.

THE WEBSITE

sieswerdastories.com

Books, author bio, press kit (this PDF), reviews, newsletter signup.

PRESS CONTACT

paul_j@gothamwhale.org

PJ Sieswerda — review copies, signed books, school visits, podcast bookings.

GOTHAM WHALE

gothamwhale.org

The nonprofit Paul Sr. founded — study, education, and advocacy of New York Harbor's whales, dolphins, and seals.

BIG WHALE, BIG CITY ON AMAZON

amazon.com/dp/1947239392

Paperback picture book · ISBN 978-1947239395 · Best Publishing Co.

A SEAL IN THE BATHTUB ON AMAZON

amazon.com/dp/0941332454

Illustrated memoir · ISBN 978-0941332453 · Best Publishing Co.

AUTHOR PAGE ON AMAZON

amazon.com/stores/Paul-L.-Sieswerda/author/B00AKX7Y2K

*All books from Paul L. Sieswerda, including *Sharks (Animal Ways)*.*

— *with salt still on his boots, Paul.*

IN MEMORIAM · PAUL L. SIESWERDA SR.