

## Greiner Talks with Jane Goodall

Interview conducted 1 June 2021

**Alexander Berth** [00:00:02] This is Greiner Talks our podcast about sustainability and transformation. My name is Alexander, I'm part of the sustainability team here at the Greiner headquarters in Austria and I couldn't be more excited about this episode today. And to be very honest, introducing my interview partner today is not an easy task because she's quite a special person. Her life and her career are simply outstanding. She started her scientific research more than 60 years ago in the jungle of Tanzania, where she was studying the behavior of wild chimpanzees and delivered groundbreaking results. But that was only the start. She's a scientist, a conservationist and an environmental advocate. Her life and her achievements are subject to countless documentaries, books and podcasts. Her voice is heard all around the globe from TED Talks to BBC to National Geographic. And if that wasn't enough, she's running a non-profit organization dedicated to the future of our planet. I think it's safe to say that she has dedicated her life to protecting our nature and its wildlife. A very warm welcome to you, Jane Goodall.

**Jane Goodall** [00:01:18] Well, thank you. And thank you for inviting me to this podcast.

**Alexander Berth** [00:01:24] It's an incredible pleasure to have you on our podcast series today. Jane, I can see a lot of books behind you. So I'm wondering, where are you at the moment and have you actually read all of these books?

**Jane Goodall** [00:01:36] Well, I'm in the house where I grew up. Yes, I should think I have probably read all the books. Many of them are the books I read as a child when we didn't have television. And I don't know if I've read them all, but I've certainly read most of them. And this is where I've been for the whole of the pandemic. I've been reaching out to the world from this one little place, and I've managed to reach millions more people in many more countries than had I been doing my previous 300 days a year traveling.

**Alexander Berth** [00:02:10] Would you say that the positive effects are actually bigger than the negative ones?

**Jane Goodall** [00:02:16] Yes, I think so. The message has gone out much further when it's a time when it's needed. But I really miss the face-to-face contact with people, with my friends around the world. That I really miss. But, you know, never mind, it's the result of what I'm doing that really matters, isn't it?

**Alexander Berth** [00:02:38] That's absolutely true. Jane, behind you I can see not only books, but some photos and I can also see a photo of a chimpanzee behind your back. Can you tell us something about that little friend?

**Jane Goodall** [00:02:51] Yes, that's a very special one. This is David Greybeard, and he was the first chimpanzee way back in 1960 to lose his fear of me. The others were running away for four months and I only had money for six months. But then for some reason, he was less afraid than the others. And on this never-to-be-forgotten day, four and a half months into the study when I only had one and a half months left, and I was really afraid that that would be the end. But then I saw him using grass stems to fish termites from their underground nest, stripping leaves from twigs to make tools. At that time it was thought that humans, and only humans, used and made tools. It was that observation that enabled my mentor, Louis Leakey, to go to National Geographic. They agreed to continue funding my research, and they also sent a photographer and filmmaker, Hugo van Lawick, to film what I was increasingly finding out about chimpanzee behavior.

**Alexander Berth** [00:04:04] We will definitely come back to your research and to chimpanzees a little later, but I would like to speak about the pandemic for a second. Because as you have mentioned, it obviously has turned our lives upside down and it has also made us realize how vulnerable we are as human beings. What lessons do we need to learn from that pandemic and how is it connected to sustainability?

**Jane Goodall** [00:04:28] Well, it's come about through our own fault. We have been consistently disrespecting animals and disrespecting the environment. And as we mistreat animals, we hunt them, kill them, eat them, destroy their habitat, push many of them in closer contact with people. We capture them, traffic them around the world, sell them in wildlife markets in Asia, Africa, Latin America, sell them for food, for medicine, for exotic pets. They are typically treated very cruelly, they are crammed into tiny cages, very unhygienic. And that is a perfect opportunity for a pathogen like a virus to jump over from an animal to a human. And when it does, it may form a new disease. So this virus possibly started in a wildlife market in China, SARS definitely did. HIV started with a bushmeat market, from chimpanzees in Africa. And many so-called zoonotic diseases started in these terrible factory farms where billions of animals are crammed into tiny, unhygienic spaces and once again, pathogens can jump over, and do.

**Alexander Berth** [00:05:58] You're already speaking about our relationship with nature, with the environment. Jane, you grew up during World War II and you have been studying that relationship since decades. I'm wondering, what changes have you observed? What's sticking out?

**Jane Goodall** [00:06:16] Unfortunately, not good changes. Right here where I am in England, the number of bird species had dropped by more than half. The insects, so many of them are gone. It's our use of pesticides, herbicides, our urbanization and our covering of more and more land with concrete. This is happening all over the world. It's this disrespect of the natural world that has led to climate change and loss of biodiversity. If we don't work out a new relationship with the natural world, with

animals, then it's going to be very grim for future generations. We've really harmed the planet, we've polluted the oceans, we destroy the forests – two great lungs of the world. Every country you go, you find this destruction of the natural world and the increasing urbanization and population growth of humans and their livestock. We find that the air is filled with smog. We find that these so-called greenhouse gases, CO<sub>2</sub> and methane, are circling the planet, trapping the heat of the sun and that's what's causing this climate change. These changes in weather patterns, as the surface of the globe heats up.

**Alexander Berth** [00:07:53] That brings one question to my mind: Are we blind and naive as humans to not see the consequences of our own behavior, of the way that we are destroying our environment? When will we realize that we can't go on like that?

**Jane Goodall** [00:08:08] It's very strange, isn't it? The biggest difference between us and our closest animal relatives, which are chimpanzees, is the explosive development of our intellect. You know, we share 98.6% of DNA with chimpanzees. But this explosive intellect development, which I think is because we at some point developed a spoken language – I can tell you and anybody listening about things that you haven't seen, I can make plans for the distant future. I think that has led to the explosive development of the intellect. Animals are way more intelligent than we used to think. But think of the internet, think of social media, think of how we can communicate around the world from one room. It's extraordinary, it's just one example – and so it is really bizarre that this most intellectual creature is destroying its only planet. I think it's because there's somehow a disconnect between this very clever brain and the human heart where we poetically seed love and compassion. I truly believe only when head and heart work in harmony can we attain our true human potential. You know, the craziness is that there's this idea that we can have unlimited economic development on a planet with finite natural resources already being used up in some places faster than nature can restore them. The growing human population – 7.2 billion of us now, predicted to be closer to 10 billion by 2050 – what's going to happen if we carry on with business as usual? That's why it's so desperately important to have this new relationship with nature. And the one thing is that during this pandemic, I do think there is greater awareness of the harm that we're inflicting on the planet, and an understanding that what we have to do is reduce our unsustainable way of living, those of us who have enough money, to alleviate poverty. Because if you're really poor, you're going to destroy the environment in your desperate effort to grow food or to make charcoal. If you in an urban area, you're going to buy the cheapest stuff, junk food, because you've got to stay alive. You can't afford to say, "Did it harm the environment? Is it cheap because of child slave labor or unequal wages? Did it harm animals?" You just have to buy the cheapest.

**Alexander Berth** [00:11:03] When you're describing our behavior and that we are not learning from the mistakes we are making, it brings one quote to my mind. It's from one

of my favorite songs from the Beatles: "Living is easy with eyes closed." And I'm wondering, would you say that this describes our human nature to a certain extent?

**Jane Goodall** [00:11:24] I think it describes it perfectly. And people, what we say, we bury our heads in the sand and just carry on. But part of that is because as people get more aware of the harm we're doing, and they are getting more aware, but at the same time, they look at all the news and they look at what's happening around the globe – they get depressed. "What can I do, it's just me?" And so they become apathetic and they do nothing. The really important thing is for everybody to understand that each single one of us, every day that we live, we make some impact. And certainly everyone listening today can, you know, choose the kind of impact that we make.

**Alexander Berth** [00:12:19] Jane, now I'm really wondering, you are one of the most renowned anthropologists in the world, and right now you're speaking on the sustainability podcast of an international plastics and foam company. Why are you doing that? What's your intention?

**Jane Goodall** [00:12:35] Well, a lot of the harm that's been inflicted on the planet has been companies like this. Companies who start off not really understanding. I remember when plastic was first invented, it was a wonder-thing, it was magic. It could keep food fresh, keep things clean, at Gombe we could keep things dry in Ziploc plastic bags. And it's only gradually that the terrible effect of plastic in the environment has become being better understood. The plastic islands out in the ocean. And we now know that plastic doesn't... It breaks down into these tiny microplastics, which are now in everything. If you eat seafood, you're going to eat bits of plastic. And as we wash our clothes in the washing machine, anything that's synthetic has a bit of plastic in it, probably and that goes out, washes down the rivers into the ocean. You see some rivers and there's plastic everywhere. So what do we have to do? So it's important to talk to companies like this. Because somehow we have to make a balance between the way we use the product and the way that it's produced. And that has to be changed on both sides.

**Alexander Berth** [00:14:12] I fully agree with you, and I believe that the only solution to this problem is creating a circular economy where things are not used in a linear way, but they are used again and again. And that's also why we have set ourselves that very ambitious goal to become fully circular within less than ten years. And you can imagine that's quite a big change to make. So my next question is: Changing is quite difficult, it's difficult for individuals, it's difficult for society, but it's also not that easy for companies. What does it take to bring about change in people's minds?

**Jane Goodall** [00:14:50] First of all, I think the secret is you have to reach – it's no good arguing up here – you've got to reach the heart. I feel very strongly about that and change has to come from within. You may get lip service to change, you may get big

companies saying that they're going to change just to get rid of whoever is bugging them. But if you can manage to tell stories, then you reach the heart and then these people begin to want to change. Once you get people wanting to change, then bring in your brilliant intellect and say, "Okay, we've sent people up to the moon, we are taking photographs of Mars, surely we can deal with what to do with plastic and how to make this circular economy, better ways of recycling and not make single-use plastic bags. For example, I gave a lecture in the biggest mosque in Dar es Salaam. The Muslims there, they're not used to having talks about the environment, it just isn't part of what they do. But anyway, I looked up everything in the Koran about animals and nature and actually there is a lot of very interesting stuff. And I gave my usual talk and I talked about the harm we were inflicting on the planet and they had all brought little plastic cups of water with them. That's what they were given when they came in. And I said, "Look at this. What's going to happen to it. What will you do with it? Will it end up in the ocean as part of that island?" And at the end, the imam stood up, and he's a very powerful one, and he said, "From now on, there will be no more plastic cups served in this mosque." And there hasn't been. I wasn't being angry with them, I was basically asking questions.

**Alexander Berth** [00:16:56] Jane, you have already mentioned it. When you were in Tanzania in the 1960s in the jungle, that was right at the time when plastics became popular. But nobody talked about plastics pollution back then, it wasn't a big issue. Today it's everywhere, it's in nature, it's in the oceans, it's even in our bodies, so everywhere where it shouldn't be. What went wrong? Why are we not learning from crisis, from similar examples? Why are we making mistakes again and again?

**Jane Goodall** [00:17:26] Because people who are making these products, they want to keep their jobs, they want to continue making money. Some very powerful CEOs, they actually don't seem to care. They just want to go on getting bigger, getting more powerful and carrying on as usual. So what can be done? Well, one thing is consumer pressure, and that is working in a lot of companies. Because if you don't like the way a company does something, don't buy the product. That changes the way companies operate. I have seen it happen again and again. And also, we have a program for young people, Roots & Shoots, which is now in over 60 countries. And we have members in kindergarten, university and everything in between. They choose three projects to make the world a better place: One to help people, one to help animals and one to help the environment – because it's all interconnected. These children are changing their parents. They get it, they're not worried about making more money and carrying on with business as usual. They understand about the pollution of plastic or whatever the issue is. And I've actually talked to CEOs who changed because their child came crying and saying, "Daddy, you are harming the planet. What's it going to be like when I have grandchildren? What will it be like for them?"

**Alexander Berth** [00:18:56] Jane, since you're speaking of CEOs and of changing things, I'm wondering – so everybody can contribute to change, but sometimes it's a



little easier if you're in a very powerful or important position. So I'm wondering, would you like to send the message to our CEO, Axel Kühner?

**Jane Goodall** [00:19:14] Yes, let me send a message to you, Axel. I know that you wouldn't have initiated a sustainable program in your organization unless you care. I don't know if you have children or grandchildren, but if you do, I'm sure you care about them. I'm sure that you would like to do everything you can to make this a better world. Plastic just does happen to be incredibly harmful unless it's properly recycled and reused. Use the talent that you have in your staff. And if you really want to change, if you really want to make your company a leading company in the production of plastics and foam, you can do it. You can make a big difference because you have the power and the authority. So, what I would say to you is, if you care at all about the future of the planet and your family, just do your best. And there's still a lot of people who will be there to help.

**Alexander Berth** [00:20:29] That is a very hopeful message. And Jane, you have a podcast yourself that's called The Hopecast. And also soon your new book, The Book of Hope, will be released. What gives you hope?

**Jane Goodall** [00:20:43] Well, my greatest hope is the young people. Because literally all over the world, as we're speaking now, there are young people who roll up their sleeves because they get to choose their projects. So, it depends on the country they're in, sometimes the religion, the culture, their age, their economic status. They choose projects that are relevant to the problems that they face. And they get out there that passionate changing their teachers and their parents and their grandparents. And as I say right now, they are changing the world. The greatest reason for hope. Secondly, this brain. I know that your company has the wherewithal and the ability to find ways to tackle the problem that is caused by plastics getting out into the environment. And this amazing intellect of ours is being used by more and more scientists to come up with innovative technologies so we can live in greater harmony. And we as individuals, we are beginning to think about each day our own environmental footprint. "How can we leave as light a footprint as possible? What can we do to help, today?" And then there's the resilience of nature. Places we absolutely destroyed can be given another chance, given time, maybe some help. And certainly on land nature comes back and nature is extraordinary. I know they have now found, I think it's an algae, that actually can digest plastic. I know in Gombe termites eat plastic. I don't know what happens to it when they eat it, but I know they eat it. Because they ate some of the covers of my equipment. So that's another reason for hope. And then finally, the indomitable human spirit, the people who tackle what seems impossible and won't give up. So it might seem impossible to solve the plastic problem, but if people tackle it and won't give up, it can be solved.

Alexander Berth [00:23:03] There was so many hopeful aspects in your final answer that even though I have many more questions on my list, I think it's a very good point to say thank you very much for this conversation, Jane.

Jane Goodall [00:23:17] And very good luck to you because you've got a difficult job, but you seem to have the energy, the enthusiasm and the determination to make a very powerful impact on the practices of the company. So congratulations.

Alexander Berth [00:23:36] Thank you so much for that wonderful conversation, Jane.

Jane Goodall [00:26:08] Well, thank you too.

Alexander Berth [00:26:10] And thank you, everybody, for listening to this very special episode of our podcast Greiner Talks. Please make sure to subscribe to our podcast series, stay healthy and have a nice day.

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