Editorial

In 1990, a number of researchers attending an international conference on North Atlantic whaling societies being held in Aarhus, Denmark, endorsed the idea that a forum to facilitate on-going communication about whaling research would be useful. It was agreed that future whaling conferences (with published proceedings) should be organized, and a newsletter should be established to facilitate communication among whaling researchers. Although the Digest communicates the results of researchers’ work (i.e., in the Publications section of each issue), it has failed to communicate news of research-in-progress. In this issue of the Digest we are pleased to include information describing an on-going research project directed at the Inuit beluga hunt and sale of whale products taking place in a Canadian whaling community. We look forward to receiving contributions from other researchers willing to share their research and thereby enhance the timely research communication function of the Network.

Material and Moral Issues Surrounding the Sale of maktaaq*

The following information was received from Martina Tyrrell, PhD candidate, in the Department of Anthropology, University of Aberdeen, Scotland.

Throughout July, August and early September each year pods of beluga whales migrate past the Inuit community of Arviat in Nunavut, on the west coast of Hudson Bay. The whales form an integral part of summer subsistence, with occasionally upwards of forty boats out on the waters in pursuit of the largest pods. On quieter days hunters spread out in boats close to shore, awaiting the whales on their route north. I spent 2002/03 in Arviat conducting anthropological research into perception, knowledge and use of the sea, for my PhD dissertation. I arrived in the community in late September, just after the beluga hunt had ended for the year. However, throughout that year, the whales continued to play a large part in community life. I arrived just in time to witness the purchase, by the local Hunters’ and Trappers Organization (HTO) of 5000lbs [2270 kg] of maktaaq from residents of Arviat. This purchase followed a request from Inuit in Nunavik [Northern Quebec] where a strict beluga hunting quota had been imposed and locals no longer had enough maktaaq to meet their subsistence needs. Following consultation between Arviat officials and the regional [Kivalliq] Wildlife Board, it was decided that Arviat would be the sole supplier of maktaaq, selling it at a set price to Inuit on the other side of Hudson Bay.

Throughout 2002/03, residents of Arviat debated the pros and cons of selling their maktaaq, and as the 2003 whale migration drew closer concerns grew regarding a repeat of the previous year’s sale. Opinion was divided. On the one hand were those who saw it as an opportunity to earn some money. The amount to be sold represented no more than twenty to thirty whales (about 10% of the annual harvest) and would not be sorely missed. If this could become a regular occurrence it would be a boon to those who chose to sell some part of their maktaaq supply. Others argued that over-harvesting had led to the imposition of the quota in northern Quebec, and if hunters did the same in Arviat waters in anticipation of a sale later in the year, then who was to say when a similar quota might be imposed on the west coast of Hudson Bay. Some said that a few households had been left without a maktaaq supply as family members rushed to make a quick sale, while others expressed moral concerns, saying that although it is good to share country food it is always wrong to sell it.

I left Arviat without the issue being resolved. The Arviat HTO was of the opinion that it had made a mistake in purchasing and selling the maktaaq in 2002, and felt they were being pressured into making a decision for the 2003 harvest. Some of those who had sold maktaaq in 2002 expressed concern that the HTO might not repeat the sale. Opinion continues to be divided. The episode raised many issues of interest to my research. It spoke to changing relationships with marine mammals and changing attitudes to sharing and selling country food. It raised concerns about many forms of risk-taking and the impact it had on hunter’s use of, and relationships with, the sea. But perhaps of most concern was the issue of quotas and the general feeling that change could be imposed from outside, from territorial or federal government authorities who could determine the future subsistence practices of a small coastal community and be a threat to Arviat livelihood. I continue to
tease through these issues. martinatyrell@eircom.net
[* maktaaq is the Inuit term for the skin and attached blubber from a whale]

**Eastern Arctic Bowhead Numbers**

For some years, bowhead whales in the Canadian Eastern Arctic were believed by many biologists to only exist in the low hundreds, at a level considered to be less than 5% of the estimated pre-exploitation bowhead population. Recent publications (see Allen and Key 1999, 2004, in Publications, below) refer to “the extinction of Eastern Arctic bowheads. Reports to the IWC Scientific Committee in the early 1980s (Davis and Koski 1980; Mitchell and Reeves 1981) estimated the total Eastern Arctic bowhead population “in the low hundreds” for the two putative Canadian stocks — the Hudson Bay and Baffin Bay stocks — suggesting very little or no recovery of the population since the commercial whaling era ended in the early years of the 20th century. An estimated 350 bowheads was posited as the estimated combined population existing in the 1980s, a number that has been accepted by many biologists since that time.

However, analysis of aerial and boat surveys of the smaller Hudson Bay stock by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) scientists during the 1990s (e.g., Cosens and Innes 2000, in Arctic 53:46-41), concluded that the minimum number of bowhead in the Hudson Bay stock (hitherto believed to be the smaller of the two Eastern Arctic bowhead stocks) was estimated to be 345 and “significantly more than the few tens of bowhead whales previously assumed”. These scientists stated that their estimate was the minimum population size, and not a population estimate, as it took no account of submerged or otherwise missed whales. From this number, DFO scientists concluded that this stock had recovered to greater than 50% of its pre-exploitation population size.

In 2000, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board published the results of an extensive indigenous knowledge study of bowhead population behaviour (Hay et al. 2000). Among the results of this study was the conclusion, based on interviews with more than 250 Inuit hunters and elders throughout the Eastern Canadian Arctic, that bowheads had increased significantly in number over recent decades in the region. The findings of this study mirror the findings of an earlier unpublished study (Stevenson 1994), based on police, traders’, missionaries and government officials’ reports of bowhead in the Cumberland Sound region of Davis Strait, that demonstrated that there was an increase in numbers of individual bowheads, numbers of bowhead groups sighted, and the number of young in these groups, over the period from the 1920s through the 1950s. However, despite documenting an increasing trend in bowhead numbers, these two reports offered no estimates of total population size.

Recently, DFO scientists reported their preliminary findings from a three-year intensive study of the Hudson Bay and Baffin Bay bowhead stocks’ summering populations throughout the Canadian Eastern Arctic. Dr. Sue Cosens, principal researcher, reported on CBC North Radio (September 13, 2004) that government scientists were confident that after adjusting the census data for the numbers of uncounted animals that are submerged, “that we’ve probably got bowheads in the low thousands... [where] people thought 20 to 30 years ago that we had low hundreds”. This potential ten-fold increase in the bowhead population, may have a positive impact on the status of the Eastern Canadian Arctic bowhead under Canada’s Species at Risk legislation, and on the quotas established for future Nunavut bowhead hunts.

100 Years of Antarctic Whaling

On 27 November 1904, the Norwegian harpoon gunner on the whale catcher Fortuna, of the Compañía Argentina de Pesca, shot the first whale taken by modern methods in the Antarctic. Whaling has been carried on in the Antarctic during the past 100 seasons, and to commemorate this centennial, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Fisheries Agency of Japan, together with the Institute of Cetacean Research, convened an international symposium in Tokyo on December 2, 2004. Japan commenced Antarctic whaling 70 years ago, in 1934/35.

The following symposium papers were presented: “The development of Norwegian Antarctic whaling in its early period”, Lars Walløe (Norway); “Competing with Norway for Antarctic whale oil: Britain and Germany”, Klaus Barthelmess (Germany); “International control of whaling in the Antarctic”, Ray Gambell (U.K.); “Advancement of Japanese style whaling into the Antarctic: its history and future”, Seiji Ohsumi (Japan); The discussion was moderated by Masayuki Komatsu (Japan). The symposium proceedings are to be published.

In October 2005, the Christensen’s Whaling Museum in Sandefjord, Norway, will hold another symposium to commemorate the centennial of modern Antarctic whaling.

New Encyclopedia Articles on Arctic Whaling

“Nunavut Wildlife Management Board” (Christopher Jastrebski), Vol.2:1533;
“Whaling, historical” (Louwrens Hacquebord), Vol. 3:2174-2179;
“Whaling, subsistence” (Mark Nuttall), Vol. 3:2179-2182;

New Journal on Marine Tourism
The table of contents of the newly published Journal of Marine Tourism, Volume 1, No.1, contains the following articles: Editorial, Michael Lück; Estimating the economic contribution of cruise ship visits, Larry Dwyer, Ngaire Douglas, and Zelko Livacic; Why dolphins may get ulcers: considering the impacts of cetacean-based tourism in New Zealand, Mark Orams; Marine tourism impacts on the Great Barrier Reef, Vicki J. Harriott; No detectable improvement in compliance to regulations by “swim-with-dolphin” operators in Port Phillip Bay, Victoria, Australia, Carol Scarpaci, Dayanthi Nugegoda, and Peter J. Corkeron; Sustainable management of marine fishing tourism, Trude Broch; Tourists still getting the bends, Jeffery Wilks, Michael Coory, and Donna Pendergast.
Book reviews: Cruise Ship Blues: The Underside of the Cruise Industry (Ross A. Klein), Ross Dowling: Marine Ecotourism: Issues and Experiences (Brian Garrod and Julie C. Wilson, editors), Marianna Sigala.
Information on subscription and guidelines for submission of papers can be found at http://www.cognizantcommunication.com

Publications


Knudsen, Siri Kristine 2004. Assessment of insensibility and death in hunted whales. A study of trauma and its consequences caused by the currently used weapons and ammunition in the Norwegian hunt for minke whales, with special emphasis on the central nervous system. DVM Dissertation. Tromsø: Norwegian School of Veterinary Science, Department of Arctic Veterinary Science. 104 + 10 + 23 + 67 pp., illus.


