Editorial

Research on whaling-related issues continues to flourish, with conferences, publications, weapons improvements, sighting surveys and management-related research from the North Atlantic and North Pacific reported in this issue of INWR Digest. Researchers can anticipate an expanding scope for research as, e.g., the Norwegians continue to normalise their whaling activities by maintaining a stable minke whale fishery and resuming international trade in whale products.

We also report on two forthcoming international conferences at which researchers in diverse fields, whalers, and managers will share information on matters of common concern related to whaling. Other news of significance reported in this issue of INWR Digest, includes the creation of a new whalers' association in the Caribbean region. This new organization is established with the purpose of protecting and enhancing Bequia's whaling heritage. It is noteworthy that after years of unequal struggle in the IWC, the small Caribbean nation of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 2002 obtained a doubling of the Bequian humpback whale quota, albeit only to four whales, but (in IWC terms) a significant increase nonetheless.

The publication section of the INWR Digest is the feature that brings us welcome feedback, but we are aware of our inability to locate and publicize the many publications appearing each year in an expanding array of journals, dissertations, reports and in other forms. If you, the reader, can supply us with information on your own (or others') publications, we will be most grateful to be able to share them with the researchers and libraries who access this modest publication variously in hardcopy (sent mainly to libraries), directly by e-mail, or on the web (our website is currently being improved).

NAMMCO 11th COUNCIL MEETING

The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO) held its 11th Council meeting in Ilulissat, Greenland, February 5-7 2002. The member governments of Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway were joined by government observers from Canada, Japan and the Russian Federation and a number of inter-governmental and non-governmental observers. Amalie Jessen (Greenland) was re-elected NAMMCO Chair, and Kaj P. Mortensen (Faroe Islands) was re-elected Vice-Chair. Reports at the meeting were received from the NAMMCO Scientific Committee; at the forefront of Scientific Committee activities is work on quantifying the interaction between marine mammals and fisheries. A report was received on a joint meeting between the Canada-Greenland Joint Commission on Conservation and Management of Narwhal and Beluga, attended by hunters from Canada and Greenland. Ships and aircraft from the Faroes, Iceland and Norway carried out the North Atlantic Sighting Survey (NASS-2001) over much of the central and northeast North Atlantic. Although minke whales were the principal whale of interest, all species encountered were recorded. NASS-2001 was coordinated by NAMMCO; the Council deplored the U.K. government decision to deny sighting vessels' access to UK waters, a decision considered counterproductive to the conservation and effective management of N. Atlantic cetaceans.

The NAMMCO International Observer Scheme has now been used in sealing and whaling operations in Norway, and in whaling in the Faroe Islands and Greenland. NAMMCO held a workshop on weapons, ammunition and ballistics used in marine mammal hunting, attended by members from Canada, Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The report from the workshop provides a reference for choosing the best weapons and ammunition for effective and humane marine mammal hunting. The NAMMCO Council also endorsed a plan

NORWAY SETS WHALING QUOTA & RESUMES EXPORTS

The Government of Norway has set the minke whale quota for the 2002 whaling season at 671; by mid-July, 520 minkes had been taken out of this quota. Recent Norwegian whaling quotas were 753 in 1999, 655 in 2000, and 549 in 2001. Whale meat is now widely available in restaurants, supermarkets and fish markets in Norway.

In January 2001, the government announced that it is ready to begin legally exporting whale products, including blubber, flukes and fins, for which no domestic market exists in Norway. The first shipment, of eight tons of meat and blubber was shipped from Norway to Iceland on July 12 2002. The CITES ban on trade in whale products is non-binding on Norway, Iceland and Japan, as these countries entered legal reservations on the CITES decision and consequently are not bound by its provisions. Both countries will control the trade through a DNA register allowing the origin of all products in the Icelandic market to be identified.

Norway, and its principal probable export market, Japan, have now standardized the DNA database established to insure no non-authorized whale products enter the Japanese market. The Norwegian authorities are waiting for Japan to issue import permits at this time.

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to hold an international conference in January 2003, bringing together hunters, managers and scientists to discuss the use of user knowledge and scientific knowledge in management decision making. The next NAMMCO Council meeting will take place in Tromsø, March 2003.

BEQUIAN WHALERS’ ASSOCIATION ESTABLISHED

In May 2002, whalers, together with a number of enthusiastic supporters of Bequian whaling cultural heritage, formed the Bequian Indigenous Whalers’ Association. The immediate objectives of the Association are to harmonize relationships between the whalers and the community, to be an informative and educational force in keeping the island whaling cultural heritage alive in the school system, to improve the shore station to insure improved processing of the whales, and to enhance the historical cultural sites associated with the whaling industry.

The Association has elected an Executive Committee consisting of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer, Public Relations Officer, and Government Liaison Officer. The Association is currently developing its programme of activities, and is working with the World Council of Whalers to create a working relationship with whalers’ associations in other countries. The Chairman of the Bequian Indigenous Whalers’ Association is Mr. Orson Ollivierre (Harpooner and Boat Owner) and the Secretary is Mr. Herman Belmar.

Whalers on the island of Bequia, in the Caribbean nation of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, hunt humpback whales and short-finned pilot whales (locally known as "blackfish"). Humpbacks are hunted from eight-metre open boats each with a crew of six, and pilot whales from smaller boats each with a four-man crew. The humpback season begins in February and continues through May after which the whales leave the region on their northward migration. In 1987 the IWC introduced a quota of three humpbacks per season, and this was reduced to two humpbacks in 1993. At the 2002 IWC meeting, the quota was increased to four whales.

NORTH PACIFIC WHALE RESEARCH

Japan has conducted a whale research programme (JARPN), involving non-lethal and lethal components, in the Northwest Pacific Ocean since 1994 under a special permit provided under Article VIII of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling. This research commenced with two main objectives: study of the population structure and feeding ecology of minke whales in the region. The population structure study was undertaken to resolve disagreements in the IWC Scientific Committee concerning the number of minke whale stocks in the region. The feeding ecology study contributes to a better understanding of the role of large marine mammals in the regional ecosystems in order to improve multispecies management of marine resources. The results of this research programme have been reviewed annually by the IWC Scientific Committee.

Following completion of JARPN in 1999, a feasibility study for a second research programme was conducted in 2000 and 2001. Priority goals in this second phase of research include the feeding ecology of selected abundant whale species, and regional marine ecosystem modelling. In addition to sampling minke whales, JARPN II added Bryde's and sperm whales to the programme. Other research goals include stock structure and the effects of marine pollution on whales and the marine ecosystem. In the two years of this feasibility study, 140 minke whales, 93 Bryde's whales and 13 sperm whales were sampled. Bryde's and sperm whales were added to the programme because, being abundant and consequently a major component of whale biomass in the North Pacific, their ecological significance as a predator requires attention for understanding marine ecosystem dynamics.

JARPN II in 2002 proposes to continue sampling minke, Bryde's and sperm whales, with 50 sei whales and an additional 50 minke whales added to the sample. The 50 minke whales in 2002 will be taken inshore by small-type catcher boats in order to augment spatial and temporal data collected offshore by larger research vessels. It is estimated that sei whales have increased more than three-fold from the ca. 9000 at the time commercial whaling for this species ended more than twenty-five years ago.


54th MEETING OF IWC

IWC held its 54th Meeting in Shimonoseki, Japan, 20-24 May 2002. Decision were taken on the following quotas under the IWC's aboriginal-subsistence whaling category: East Pacific gray whale (for Russian Yupiit and Chukchi and U.S. Makah whaling communities) 620 whales over the 2003-2006 seasons; West Greenland fin whales, 19/year for the 2003-2006 seasons; West Greenland minke whales, 175/year for the 2003-2006 seasons, with up to 15 whales not utilized in any year allowed to be carried over to the succeeding year; East Greenland minke whales, 12/year for the 2003-2006 season, with up to 3 whales carried over if not utilized; St. Vincent & Grenadine humpback whales, not to exceed 20 whales over the 2003-2007 seasons, with no hunting of females accompanied by calves; Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort (BCB) sea bowheads (utilized by Russian Yupiit & Chukchi and Alaskan Yupiit and Inupiat hunters), 280 strokes over the 2003-2006 seasons, with no more than 68 strokes/year and up to 14 strokes allowed to be carried over if not used in the preceding year. The BCB quota was voted upon, and failed to receive a three-fourths majority approval. However, after the conclusion of the meeting, Japan indicated it would not continue to oppose the quota, and it appears likely that IWC will approve the quota through a postal vote or some other means.

Discussion continued on the Revised Management Scheme (RMS) for commercial whaling without any conclusion being reached. The Scientific Committee reported progress on developing a management regime for aboriginal-subsistence whaling, including scientific approach to recommending strike limits for bowhead and other whale species.

Six new members joined the IWC: Benin, Gabon, Mongolia, Palau, Portugal, San Marino. Iceland, which rejoined IWC in 2001 was again denied full membership (20 in favour, 25 against), a vote that Iceland and some other members consider illegal.
A resolution proposing the establishment of a South Pacific Whale Sanctuary, requiring a three-quarter majority, failed to carry (24 in favour, 16 against, 5 abstentions), as did a similar resolution for a South Atlantic whale sanctuary (23-18-4). A resolution proposing changes to the provisions of the Southern Oceans (Antarctic) Sanctuary also failed (17 in favour, 25 against, 2 abstentions).

The Commission reached no decision on making funding the organization more equitable, and asked the Task Force looking at this issue to complete its work by the 2003 meeting (June 2003, in Berlin). Interim measures have been adopted to provide relief for some members. The Commission decided to reduce research funding, placing in peril the success of research it had earlier decided to strengthen (relating to effects of pollution on whales, and baleen whale habitat and feeding relationships).

CONFERENCES

Whaling for the Future. A conference and workshop, organized by the World Council of Whalers (WCW) will be held in association with the WCW 2002 General Assembly. These meetings are being held in Tórshavn, Faroe Islands 26-29 September 2002 at the invitation of the Government of the Faroes Islands and the Faroese Pilot Whalers Association. The conference will include reports from whaling societies from around the world, sessions to discuss whaling economics and trade, and diverse and progressive approaches to managing whaling. A practical workshop will be held on flensing, product handling and storage, and methods of sampling for research, and a culinary exposition will include the works of chefs from a number of countries. Contact: WCW Conference Convenor at <mf2@ualberta.ca> or fax 1-780-492-1153.

User Knowledge and Scientific Knowledge in Management Decision Making. This conference, organized by the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO) will be held in Reykjavik, Iceland, 4-7 January 2003. The purpose of the conference is to compare the foundations, strengths and weaknesses of the two systems of knowledge in resource management decision making, more particularly in regard to marine mammals. The conclusions from these discussions will aid discussion on how management decisions can best be improved based upon both user knowledge and western science. Sessions at the conference will focus upon, e.g., existing user knowledge projects; how user knowledge and scientific knowledge is gathered, kept and transmitted, and the weaknesses and strengths of each system; how to facilitate better cooperation between practitioners of each knowledge system; the management decision-making process. For further information and registration contact: NAMMCO Secretariat, Tel: 47-77-75-01-80; Fax: 47-77-75-01-81; e-mail:nammco-sec@nammco.no; www.nammco.no/conference2003/

JOURNAL OF PACIFIC MARITIME HISTORY

The San Diego Maritime Museum has produced two recent issues of their journal, Mains'l Haul: A Journal of Pacific Maritime History on Pacific shore whaling.

Whale Hunters on Western Shores (Mains'l Haul Vol. 37, No.1 (2001) includes: "Of whales and men", Ray Ashley (pp.2-3); "A dead whale or a stove boat: the history and archaeology of the Ballast Point whaling station", Ronald V. May (pp.4-11); "Nineteenth-century whaling on California shores", Georgia Fox (12-19); "Japanese whaling at Point Lobos, California", Sandy Lydon (pp.20-29); "Power whaling: industrial shore whaling on the west coast 1905-1972", Robert Webb (pp.30-46).

Shore Whalers around the Pacific Rim (Mains'l Haul Vol. 37, No. 3 & 4 (2001) includes: "From the helm", Ray Ashley (pp.2-3); "Whaling in the South Seas: archeological evidence of Australia's first industry", Susan Lawrence (pp.4-11); "Unearthing the invisible people: European families and aboriginal people at South Australian whaling stations", Mark Staniforth, Susan Briggs and Chris Lewczak (pp. 12-19); "A Japanese whale hunt in 1829: selections from the Isana-tori Ekotoba. An introduction to net whaling in Japan", Katsuaki Morita (pp.20-2), with "Notes on the Isana-tori Ekotoba" by Frank M. Stuart (pp. 21-25); "Japanese whalers in Korean waters, 1890-1910", Katsuaki Morita (pp.26-36); "A citizen of the Pacific Rim: Nils Nilsen", Joan Goddard (p.37); "The Japanese experience in western Canadian whaling", Joan Goddard (pp.38-47).

Contact: Mark Allen (editor), San Diego Maritime Museum, 1492 N. Harbor Drive, San Diego CA 92101 <editor@sdmaritime.com>

PUBLICATIONS


Creswell, J. 2002. The exploitation, history and present status of marine mammals in Barbados, W.I. Available at: www.macalester.edu/environmentalstudies/MacEnvReview/articles.htm


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A.P. McCartney (ed)
Sale price $20.00

The Anthropology of Community Based Whaling in Greenland.
M.G. Stevenson, A. Madsen and E. Maloney (eds)
Sale price $30.00


