



Sustainable eNews

IWMC World Conservation Trust

Saving Polar Bears by Killing Them?



CHURCHVILLE, VAA recent article in the British journal *Nature* warns that polar bears are increasingly mating with grizzly bears because man-made climate change is rapidly melting the Arctic sea ice on which the polar bears love to hunt seals.

Breathlessly, we're told that a hybrid grizzly/polar bear was discovered in 2006. More recently another bear shot by a hunter also had mixed DNA. The offending hybrid bears should be "culled" a kinder

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word than “killed” according to lead author Brendan Kelly of the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Hold on a minute. Let's bless this story with some bits of reality. :

First, there's no evidence the Arctic ice cap is really shrinking. The Arctic has a warming/cooling cycle of about 70 years, and the old archives of the *New York Times* are filled with stories from the 1920s and 1930s about the Arctic ice disappearing. Those 1920's stories turned out to be wrong, and the ice-expert Russians tell us they'll be wrong this time too.

The Arctic has warmed more than the rest of the planet since 1850, but the Arctic always warms and cools more rapidly than the earth's lower latitudes. It has to do with the laws of physics.

Second, the polar bear was originally an offshoot of the brown bear family. The polar bear is thought to date from about 200,000 years ago when a population of brown bears was apparently trapped by glaciers in an area near Siberia. Those bears underwent a rapid series of evolutionary changes to survive, including changing the color of their fur to better disguise themselves from the seals, and changing the shape of their bodies to facilitate swimming.

Third, there's precious little evidence of any trend toward more hybrid bears. Two bears in five years across the entire Canadian polar bear habitat can hardly be dignified as a trend. Especially, since it's just a reverse engineering of the polar bear's original evolution.

Why did our NOAA author write up this bit of information as a trend that could “doom the polar bear”? Why did one of the two most prestigious

science journals in the world print it, based on such flimsy evidence? Could this be just a continuation of the scientific sell-out on “blame humans for destroying Nature”? The scare has meant billions of dollars for a few key groups and front-page headlines for climate alarmists and credulous “environmental writers” around the world.

If the Siberian humans of 200,000 years ago had killed all the white bears that began to appear, we'd never have had the polar bear species. Humans would have forestalled one of Nature's major strategies for improving and adapting her animals. Are today's humans proposing to play the eugenics card to stop adaptation? Are activists afraid of the adaptations the animals produce themselves? Further, we know all of today's species have adapted to massive past changes in the earth's climate.

The claim of “unprecedented speed” in modern climate change is false. At the end of the Younger Dryas cooling event 11,500 years ago, temperatures near Greenland rose 15 degrees C in less than a human lifetime! Ocean temperatures and sea ice conditions apparently moved even faster. The polar bears obviously survived this.

(A question: About 500 Polar bears are killed by permit each year in Canada. Will each bear have its DNA tested and will hunters be charged more, or less, if their kill counts as a hybrid?)

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Seal Sale to China: Good News for People, Seals and Fish



Here's one case in which the “social media” effect on government actions has not worked out, regardless of the

well laid business plans of the IFAW and Humane Society International: Canada's sealer-fishermen will find that a new and substantial market for seal products has materialized in China. The EU ban on the import of seal products shall no longer be a detriment to the management of the Canadian east coast fisheries and to the control and use of harp seals.

The government of Canada, in conjunction with the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador, has negotiated a trade agreement with the government of the People's Republic of China, in which seal meat, pelts and fat shall be purchased there for processing and sale. Animal activists are not expected to have an adverse impact on this arrangement. Chinese people shall soon enjoy the products of this over abundant, beautiful marine species.

In 1981, there were 1.8 million harp seals migrating from the Arctic to the eastern coast of Newfoundland and to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, each December. Canadian fishermen, through a well-supervised, national program of wildlife management, routinely harvested these animals. This program ensured that quotas were not exceeded, and that animals were killed humanely. Regardless of the professionalism of this management program, animal rights activists claimed that seals must not be killed for moral reasons, claiming that techniques used were inhumane and that stocks were being over-harvested.

Although veterinarians certified that the hunt was humane and biologists that seal numbers were growing, the European public became concerned due to activist communications in newspapers,

magazines and on television. By the time there was an Internet, the social brakes on seal markets had resulted in the harp seal population swelling to over 6 million animals. European Union citizens began to contact their governments via email, because they were so saddened by the claims of activist websites. Citizens demanded that the EU ban the import of any seal products. Therefore it came to pass that poorly informed good, humane people have had an adverse impact on the welfare of harp seals, of fish, sea birds, and human fishermen and their families. This happened because the decreased and finally, the end of the European market for seals resulted in the harp seal population burgeoning to some 10 million animals by 2010.

Harp seals are so hungry, they are breaking into aquaculture facilities and gouging the bellies out of hundreds of thousands of living cod. They are fighting each other for access to any food and to mates, and their blubber is decreased in thickness, indicating a poorer condition than even a few years ago. The situation has become desperate, all because of a scientifically unjustified social halt to the process of sustainable use of a tremendously abundant seal resource.

IWMC, our well-informed supporters, and all of eastern Canada are hopeful that the recent trade agreement shall begin to bring relief to the people and the marine ecosystem of this beleaguered area. Chinese people shall soon enjoy and benefit from the products of harp seals, which are abundant, beautifully furred, and whose oils are beneficial to human health. May this new human agreement result in the long awaited correction of a major environmental and social problem. IWMC heartily congratulates both Canada and China for their dedication and success in finalizing the details of this historic trade agreement.

Wolves and People: Co-Existence, Conflict and Cultural Values

Wolves and humans have co-existed in the same habitats in many parts of the world for millennia. Much of modern man's existence has been affected by these animals, as they have variously impacted our lives; in some areas, wolf young were taken in by people and eventually, after many generations, *Canis lupus* became genetically modified through selective breeding, to become *Canis familiaris*, our beloved dog in all its myriad breed forms. In other times and places, people have been at war with wolves when livestock were preyed upon, or when people were attacked as prey objects. Human legends about human/wolf relationships are common over much of the northern hemisphere.

Today, wolves are recognized as increasingly scarce in much of their range, due to efforts by people to cut down on their numbers because of conflicts that are both social and economic in impact; many societies seek to eliminate the animals near human settlements and in some instances, this becomes a politically hot topic. Therefore, some countries have laws on their books making it illegal to kill wolves, protecting them in their natural range, regardless of their impact on other wildlife and on livestock.

In Sweden, it is apparent that wolves are not regarded with favor, as some 14 were recently killed through government efforts. There is currently very little published information in English about the circumstances in Sweden that led to this occurrence. It is not known if they have recently been perceived there as a menace to humans or to domestic animals, but that is the likely reason why the extermination of these particular animals has been carried out. When humans perceive that wildlife is a significant

threat to their own well-being, citizens commonly demand that their government wildlife authorities "do something" to solve their problems.

Because Sweden is a part of the European Union, and because the WWF and other NGOs became aware of the killings, political pressure on EU officials has resulted in the usual "public outcry", probably through Internet access to EU wildlife offices.

IWMC observes that social media impact is an increasingly significant stimulus to international political action. It has driven the regrettable impasse at the IWC, and similar failures at negotiation and compromise through a scientific basis for policy at CITES. In the case of Sweden's recent action to cull certain wolves in its own territory, the EU, stimulated by the urgings of WWF, may soon bring legal action against Sweden on grounds that this EU member has "violated" EU policy on protection of an endangered species.

Environment Commissioner Janez Potocnik said, "The actions of the Swedish authorities leave me with little choice other than to propose to the Commission that it begin formal proceedings against Sweden for breach of EU environmental law." He also noted that Sweden should replace those animals with transplanted wolves from other countries.

IWMC urges that responsible observers of this process consider the environmental, social and cultural implications of such "formal proceedings" and the circumstances in Sweden that precipitated the Swedish official action. Of course, wolves are an important biological component in each

part of their range. And just as importantly, human beings that also occupy that range need to be given due consideration as they carry out their livelihoods. Surely, it is possible that people can find ways to live in their homelands while adjusting the environment as necessary, without doing significant harm to an entire species. Local removal of problem animals is a common solution that has been carried out in many areas where wolves and people co-exist. It is not as though the species is being driven to extinction by the Swedish action.

The EU Environment Commissioner's decision to bring EU charges against Sweden should perhaps be tempered with public disclosure of a number of factors - the specific problems in Sweden, the actual wolf stock status there, and the human factors in Sweden that are relevant. Ultimately, fair and scientifically based solutions to problems such as this are preferable, rather than political impositions of power without consideration of the entire problem. IWMC wishes all parties to this issue the best as people work to solve the current dispute and set meaningful precedents for future problems.

Shark Fishing: Should the PEW and WWF Agendas be an Integral Part of CITES Policies?

IWMC notes that many nations have agreed on the necessity of adequate scientific assessment of the sustainability of marine fisheries. Although Atlantic bluefin tuna have been featured in major media pieces on fishery problems, the degree to which shark species are being utilized is not as often or as avidly covered by those same media outlets. Perhaps one reason for this is that tuna are considered a resource, rather than a menace to humans, while sharks often make the news when they attack us at beaches. Nevertheless, there is concern that a number of shark species are being over-utilized without much public attention being paid to that claim.

The matter of shark fishery regulation was discussed in Rome during the week of January 31st through February 4th, as the UN FAO's Committee on Fisheries reviewed the last ten years of international fisheries management and lack thereof where sharks are concerned.

"TRAFFIC , has raised an alarm on its own website (www.traffic.org/home). In a recent report

prepared jointly with the PEW Foundation, TRAFFIC claims that sharks appear to be in serious decline around the globe, due to alleged over fishing by humans, and that this situation is of grave concern because sharks are major predators of many other forms of marine life. Their significant decline, if it is a reality, is expected to result in serious ecosystem imbalance wherever it occurs.

The twenty nations whose fishers catch the most sharks, are annually taking more than 640,000 tons of fish, which is thought to be nearly 80 percent of the total global catch. Of these nations, "the only one that has reviewed and revised its national plan of action on shark conservation measures" is Japan, according to the TRAFFIC website. Further reported there, is the claim that Indonesia, India, Spain, Taiwan, Argentina, Mexico, Pakistan and the US all each take more tonnage of sharks than do Japan and Malaysia, the two with the lowest takes on the 20-nation list.

TRAFFIC, considered "an arm" of CITES Secretariat, sometimes involved in the preparation of CITES Secretariat recommendations, has already been subject to very serious criticisms by CITES Parties, mainly Argentina, for being under control of WWF. The concerns on TRAFFIC credibility could be seriously enhanced by it being associated with the PEW Foundation... One could feel very uncomfortable in having the CITES Secretariat recommendations originating from these two organizations. The relationship between CITES Secretariat and TRAFFIC could be subject of an evaluation by CITES Standing Committee.

It still remains that, in 2001 the UN FAO signatory nations agreed to institute their own management and conservation measures as national plans with which to monitor and manage their own fishers and the shark catches they bring in to

port. While the TRAFFIC organization reports that some 73 million sharks are annually taken for their fins, there is no published estimate of regional stock figures, nor is there a published estimate of global shark stocks, of which the 73 million harvested animals are a part.

IWMC encourages all fish harvesting nations to diligently and honestly assess and disclose their best estimates of the abundance of fish stocks that their fishers harvest, and to cooperate with the UN FAO and other relevant organizations in sincere efforts to achieve documentable, sustainable use of those stocks. While this is a responsibility of all fishing nations, consumer nations should also require that certification of sustainable harvest is a prerequisite for on-going commerce. Surely, this responsible mode of conduct shall contribute to the health of the marine ecosystems upon which we all depend

Cool It - It's Not Our Fault

Yes, man-made pollution is bad for humans and for the other life forms on earth. We humans have been accused of impacting the planet's climate since we first gave up hunting for a living and began to clear forests, plant crops, and keep cows. (Cows emit a lot of methane). Our encouragement of human population growth has contributed to local "heat islands" around our cities, which collect and radiate the sun's heat due to concentrations of brick and stone and lessened vegetation - as in trees. Regardless, the heat islands themselves have accounted for negligible temperature increases on a global scale since the industrial revolution, which itself, as a man made phenomenon, has contributed very little to our planet's average temperature change since 1945, when our world businesses really began to take off. In fact, from 1940 to 1975, the climate cooled considerably, despite our best efforts to warm it with greenhouse gases.

We humans have to remember that earth's climate is undergoing change all the time, usually in increments barely noticeable from decade to decade, but sometimes, worrisome elevations or declines do tend to impress us and make us wonder...is our world noticing because our factories are spewing forth noxious gases, our jets are fogging the skies, and our cars are choking us up? *We must be having a negative impact - right?*

Not so fast. Over the last half a million years, the world has undergone four major glacial periods, with intervening interglacials, one of which we are enjoying now, since about ten thousand years ago. Yes, it has neatly coincided with the growth of the most successfully meddlesome species on the planet. But the present interglacial was going to happen anyway, as will the next major earth

glaciation, which will undoubtedly be a disaster for humankind. That should happen within about the next 30,000 years, no matter how much we fog up the atmosphere.

Yes, responsible nations should take all possible steps to cut down on their industrial emissions of greenhouse gases. Smog and other waste products are unhealthy for all life on earth. This is reason enough for a serious global attempt to control them - but so far, the Kyoto Protocol has not impressed the two major polluters, the USA and China, and now, Australia has also not signed on to that UN measure, which was ratified by 164 other governments on July 10, 2006. While both the US and Australia signed the Protocol, neither of their national legislatures has ratified it, therefore they are not bound by it. So much for altruism. National economies and national politics are paramount.

China and India get a pass because they are "developing" nations, which the world felt should be given leeway in this industrial emissions quota system.

Skeptics should check out the January 25, 2011 edition of Environmental News, in which Dennis T. Avery's piece "New Study Affirms Natural Climate Change" discusses the global warming debate and contrasts alarmist views with recent work by an Indian scientist, Dr. U.R. Rao, who claims that solar variations and cosmic ray changes "account for 40 percent of the world's recent global warming." Avery and his colleagues point out flaws in the arguments of those who insist that there is global warming and it is our entire fault.

We have to remember that it has all happened before, when mankind was not yet created as an upright troublemaker. Tropical vegetation was at least once, rampant in Norway and in Antarctica, and since that time, the earth has cooled and ice

has covered continents for hundreds of thousands of years at a time, then warmed and melted these continental glaciers, then frozen over again. What incredible hubris are we humans engaging in, to try to convince our fellow (perhaps not well informed in geological science) homo sapiens that right now, we are responsible for the piddling warming that has been observed since the 1970s?

Earth warming and cooling periods are not easily explained; continents are constantly on the move, crashing into one another every few hundred million years. These moves alter ocean currents that themselves, curling up or down from the equator, affect the climate on either end of the earth. Volcanoes spew forth greenhouse gases that dwarf our own efforts to foul the planet. The earth tilts on its axis and alters its orbit around the sun from time to time, also affecting the degree to which the sun can warm us. And finally, the sun itself changes its magnetic and radiant heat outputs, from time to time, without informing us handily ahead of time. Nothing is easily predictable, except, perhaps, the propensity of human beings to blame each other for changes in life conditions here on planet earth. Shall we all, finally, just do the best we can to clean up after ourselves and adapt to whatever climatic changes come along? Our powers are meager, compared to those that impact this world in its entirety.



Falconry Forever An International Cultural Celebration

IWMC is pleased to report that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has formally recognized falconry as a significant cultural tradition. The UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage has added Falconry to its list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The art of falconry has been practiced in many nations for the past 4,000 years, and has benefited humanity throughout that time by encouraging partnership of humans and falcons in the use of a number of abundant prey species. In the modern world, a practical application of the art has been to control certain bird species near major airports, in the ongoing effort to prevent plane/bird collisions during take off and landing operations.

In many nations, the art of falconry has operated uninterrupted for hundreds of generations as adults have directed their children in the respect-

ful handling and propagation of their birds of prey and in the sustainable use of prey species in a human/bird cooperative hunting tradition.

IWMC congratulates the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey for its persistence in education of the world public regarding this tradition, and for their plan to hold an assembly of 10,000 falconers from around the world in Abu Dhabi in December 2011. (See www.falconryfestival.com). The Falconry Festival shall demonstrate that this is still very much a viable and cherished world heritage tradition, embodying all that is beneficial to humans and their birds of prey such as falcons and certain eagles. The eleven nations of Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Korea, Mongolia, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Syria and the United Arab Emirates worked together to make the UNESCO declaration a reality in what UNESCO officials have said is "an outstanding example of cooperation between nations".

Noteworthy

Sharkman of Cortez by Captain Bill Goldschmitt and Marisa Mangani.

"Learn the Truth about Sharks from a Man whose Livelihood depended on Them..."
The book is available by contacting: <sharkman@sharkmanofcortez.com>

A Sharkman Predator Round-Up will take place from 3 to 29 March 2011 in Cortez Florida. All participants in this tournament are encouraged to donate their catch for both research and edible species to feed the homeless. Further information on this tournament, please contact www.sharkmanofcortez.com