

Sustainable eNews

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Promoting Sustainable Use

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IWMC
World Conservation Trust

Editorial: Jeep-errs

By Howard Noseworthy

General Manager of the Ontario Fur Managers Federation

In early April, the cry rang out, “Good news! Good news! The insults hurled for months by DaimlerChrysler against sealers have ceased.”

For those unfamiliar with the story, a Jeep Liberty commercial appeared on the airwaves in which a man drives his Jeep across the ice to a stranded seal pup, raises a spear into the air and brings it crashing down, not onto the seal but through the ice, thereby “liberating” the seal pup so that it can return to its mother. An orchestrated letter-writing campaign opposing a stereotypical portrayal of sealers caused DaimlerChrysler to capitulate, and the advertisement has been cancelled. Good stuff, right?



Well, yes, but the ad follows closely DaimlerChrysler’s ill-fated deer hunter commercial, in which the drivers of Jeep Grand Cherokees “liberate” deer from hunters. Same type of letter-writing campaign, same capitulation by DaimlerChrysler.

Come to think of it, same excuses, same words, a la “our tongue in cheek portrayal was not intended to be offensive”. To quote from DaimlerChrysler’s letter of “apology” sent out to those who complained about the seal hunter ad, “the negative emotion among some viewers relative to this story line was not anticipated”.

Well, except in the absence of a collective lobotomy by DaimlerChrysler’s advertising executives, how could they anticipate anything else but negative emotion, when a slur against deer hunters was followed by a slur against sealers?

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So DaimlerChrysler insults hunters, the outdoors community cries foul, they offer an “apology” and we shout “Hurray!”, and congratulate ourselves. And then the same company uses the same story line to insult sealers, and the outdoors community cries foul, they offer an “apology” and we shout “Hurray!”, and congratulate ourselves. So what’s next for Jeep – “liberating” trout? And what’s next for us – complaints and victory, after the damage has been done? The cliches abound – “You can’t unscramble scrambled eggs”, “It’s too late to close the barn door after the horse has fled”, “Everyone makes mistakes; that’s what erasers are for”, etc.

DaimlerChrysler’s portrayal that their SUV’s are environmentally friendly, while hunters and sealers are not, is of course patently ridiculous. But if they truly wanted to display any measure of environmental conscience, they would be better served to talk about fuel consumption and emission controls, real things that might be of interest to an informed consumer. Especially when the audience they pander to with misleading ads is just as likely to be protesting Jeep’s auto emissions on the same street corner where they protest hunting and sealing. Or to put it bluntly, the so-called “hook and bullet crowd” are probably more likely to buy SUV’s and 4x4 pickups than the armchair environmentalists. Seems there should be a stronger relationship between DaimlerChrysler and the outdoors community than the relationship of err and forgive.

Maybe DaimlerChrysler just doesn’t get it. Maybe they don’t understand that you shouldn’t attack your target consumer. But maybe we just don’t get it either, when we believe that months of public insult can be undone by very quiet and un-public retraction and apology. Or to quote Albert Einstein, “The significant problems we face cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them.”

That is not to say that we should not set the record straight at every opportunity, but actions do speak louder than words. From a personal perspective, I drive a pickup truck. I couldn’t operate my trapline without one, and it really comes in handy for my hunting and fishing excursions with my family, too. It just happens that I drive a Dodge Ram pickup, made by DaimlerChrysler. As a trapper/hunter/fisherman, born and bred on the rocks of Newfoundland, with ancestral roots deeply planted in Newfoundland’s rich and proud sealing heritage, I’m somewhat mystified by DaimlerChrysler’s attack on my support of their product. But at least they have made me a far better informed consumer as I consider my choice of a new pickup; the deer hunter commercial got me looking at other brands, and the seal hunter commercial simply clinched the deal. Freedom of choice is at least as powerful as freedom of expression.

Howard Noseworthy now makes his home in northern Ontario, where he also operates a registered trapline.

Upcoming Event

September 10 - 13: The 93rd annual meeting of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies at the Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center in Madison, Wisconsin. For further information, please contact cindy@delaneymeetingevent.com.

Canada's Senate Stands Up to Animal Rights Groups

Animal rights activists in Canada are upset that their attempt to secure animal welfare legislation is stalling in the nation's Senate. More than three years after legislation was first introduced in the Commons, it seems no one can agree on a definition for "animal".

The activists want the new law to be as far-reaching as possible, covering all animals that "have the capacity to feel pain". The Senate prefers the scientifically correct definition of "a vertebrate, other than a human being" and wants the law to be specific about what does, and does not, constitute animal cruelty.

While a lawyer for the Animal Alliance decreed that there are "no grounds for further amendments" to the bill because not only had it passed the lower house, it had also been "scrutinized by many people, including the Department of Justice and their lawyers", Canada's political system requires wider consultations.

And while it is one thing for Animal Alliance lawyers to minimize the constitutional role of

the Senate in the establishment of new laws, it is another to discount the views and testimony of other interested groups, such as hunters, trappers, anglers, medical researchers and businessmen whose livelihoods and welfare are inextricably linked to utilizing animals.

Nobody wants to see pets or other animals maltreated because of human neglect or malice. But the activists have tried to use this bill as a vehicle for an agenda to prohibit the use of animals in all circumstances. That is why the bill is rightly being amended by the Senate and that is why the activists are threatening to withdraw their support for it.

But the activists' reaction also reveals how little they really care about what most people would regard as animal cruelty. IFAW, one of the animal rights groups involved in fighting the amendments, recently opposed a private members bill introduced in the Ontario legislature by Julia Munro that strengthens the law against abusive operators of puppy and kitten mills. Enough said.

Seal Time Once Again

Spring 2003 has been late in coming to the northeastern coast of North America, but the seals don't know that. Over five million of them are on the ice of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and off the Newfoundland coast on the "Front". Harp seal pups were born the first week in March, and now are ready for harvesting. Betes de la Mer, or "Beaters" are the young of the year, and theirs are the only marketable harp sealskins at this time. The market is not quite as good as last year. Prices for the average beater pelt hover around \$35 to \$40 (Canadian) average, with the best grades going around \$55. Some 400 boats were off the front, where they found the seals some 40 to 50 miles out to sea, in rough, heavy storm seas and with heavy ice. It's a rough way to make a living.

Inuit sales of ringed seals are bound to be affected by the harp seal glut. Both native and Newfoundland cultures and economies are therefore impacted by the great abundance of pelts. Although sealers were anxious to get out to the front and take their share of the quota, this has been a year of heavy seas, icing conditions on the boats, and danger. Not the best conditions in which to hunt. A still less than optimal market dampens the enthusiasm for sealing.



What are the reasons for this situation? The European market for sealskin disappeared in

1983, with a legislative ban (in what was to become the EU) on the products of seals under the age of one year. The ban was accomplished by a huge marketing effort on the part of the International Fund for Animal Welfare, whose petition drive in Europe resulted in legislators voting in the ban to protect their jobs.

Since that time, both Inuit people and Newfoundlanders have been hard pressed to pay their bills, feed the family, and sustain their economies. The rest of the world is now being encouraged to buy sealskin. China and the rest of the Far East, including Russia, are being contacted by all manner of fur sellers, so now sealskin is competing hard with mink, beaver, coyote, fox, and other wild furs.

Farmed furs are also on the market, and all these products are affected by the world economic system, itself affected by everything from the threat of terrorism, to the war in Iraq, the SARS epidemic (which keeps Chinese buyers out of Canada, for instance) and the world's iffy or falling stock markets.

IWMC sends all our best wishes to the seal hunters of the Far North and Newfoundland.

The best that could happen is that new and more profitable markets will be found for sealskin, seal oil as food supplements, and meat products. [In fact, the best of the best would be the sudden death of the infamous US Marine Mammals Protection Act.] The international market for fur supports conservation, and all those people who depend on renewable resources and sound habitats. IWMC applauds the DFO for its efforts to get their seal managers over this hump. The ecological disaster started by the IFAW must not be allowed to run its course. Seals must be controlled through widespread use, they must not be wasted, and the nonsense about sterilizing them must be scrapped for the idiocy it is. The sooner a widespread harvest of seals can be accomplished, the sooner the herds will be brought under control, and the entire ecosystem can settle back into something approaching a normal state. Good Luck, to Canada and to all the Inuit people there and in Greenland.

UK Government Study offers New Hope

by Eugene Lapointe

A study for the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) showing that the use of wildlife in deprived regions of the world is important for development and for poor people, should encourage a re-think of the UK's approach towards global conservation issues, according to IWMC World Conservation Trust. The "Wildlife and Poverty Study" was published in December 2002.

The study is significant because it highlights the difficulties and contradictions faced by developed nations when they deal simultaneously with human and animal welfare issues overseas. The study concludes that “wildlife is a means of promoting employment and enterprise development” and also notes that “wild resources are often key to local cultural values and tradition and contribute to local and wider environmental sustainability.”

The UK government appears to be facing up to the fact that animals cannot be placed before humans where questions of global poverty are concerned. There now needs to be a re-evaluation of the disastrous protectionist policies followed by UK officials at international environmental meetings and a shake-up of certain departmental responsibilities.

At meetings of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the UK has rigidly followed the protectionist environmental positions promoted by groups such as the World Wide Fund for Nature/UK (WWF/UK), Greenpeace and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). UK officials have regularly opposed the use of wildlife for anything except tourism and pressured other countries in the European Union and British Commonwealth to do the same. The result is that poor nations have often been unable to utilize their resources in a controlled and sustainable manner.

For some westerners, it has become immoral for any wild animal to be hunted for food or to raise revenue, whatever the level of its overall abundance and whatever management controls are in place. The protection of species has become a means to force people into poverty.

In November 2002, UK officials from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) battled to prevent the CITES COP12 meeting from authorizing the sale of small stockpiles of ivory from five African countries. With revenue from the sale slated to support local conservation programs, and with the ivory originating from the natural deaths of elephants and from management programs, there should have been little reason to oppose the proposal. Botswana, Namibia and South Africa prevailed by securing narrow majorities, while Zimbabwe and Zambia were unsuccessful.

The ivory vote demonstrates how one set of government officials will focus on only one part of the overall equation. Had the UK also been represented by DFID representatives, the chances are that much greater weight would have been given to the human factors and to the need to have conservation systems in place that employ people and provide local income. There would clearly be value in DFID officials belonging to future delegations at CITES.

Animal welfare fraudster Caged Munich (Reuters)

The former head of one of Germany's biggest animal welfare groups was sentenced to 12 years in jail in Munich on Tuesday after being found guilty of embezzling US\$28 million from animal lovers.

Wolfgang Ullrich, 58, was convicted of 137 separate counts of fraud over a five-year period from 1994 to 1999 when he was head of the Deutsches Tierhilfswerk, Germany's largest independent animal welfare group with 230,000 members.

Thai police first arrested Ullrich, who ran a restaurant business in the resort of Pattaya, in 1998 after investigating him for tax evasion.

Subsequent investigations into his finances uncovered a front company Ullrich had set up in Switzerland, into which he channeled donations from animal lovers.

Deutsches Tierhilfswerk said it would now try to sue for compensation.

(Source: Japan Times, April 4, 2003)

Terrorism: It's not always about animals - Perhaps it never really was by Janice Henke, Anthropologist

The Center for Consumer Freedom keeps track of the writings and speeches of animal rights activists, and reports on these by e-mail (info@consumerfreedom.com) to subscribers and supporters. This is a valuable service for anyone who hasn't time or inclination to personally visit all the activist web sites and be deeply offended by the original material posted there.

The following are some of the news reports that have surfaced recently:

On March 19 it was reported that Craig Rosebraugh, spokesperson for the Earth Liberation Front, has written a "manifesto" that calls for specific tactics and goals that dissidents should pursue in a domestic effort to wage war against the United States. The actions listed are urged on those who oppose the war in Iraq, and include wreaking physical damage to US media outlets, US economic institutions, and military facilities. Rosebraugh advocated striking at the heads of

US corporations and at government officials in their homes and places of business. He called on activists to riot in the streets and to do all they can to shut down the government, in order to divert military action away from Iraq.

What is this? It is a group of animal rights terrorists expanding their agenda within the US, in an effort to weaken the government and to frighten and harass citizens. PETA's Ingrid Newkirk has also been doing her best to foster anti-social behavior as she wrote an open letter on her web site: she tells fellow activists not to cooperate with or even talk to, FBI agents about any past, present or future protest plans or events. Of course, it appears that Newkirk may be worried that some of her protégés may divulge information that could get her in trouble - for her assistance to animal rights arsonists such as Rod Coronado, whom she supported with legal fees when he was convicted of torching a Michigan University laboratory.

Very soon, it will be time for these and other animal rights criminal types to do their thing again; April 19 through April 27 is their "World Week for Animals in Laboratories" and it is expected that the focus will once again be on terrorizing employees of facilities such as universities, commercial medical labs, and even those government laboratories that use animals in research.

The FBI will be watching, as usual, and IWMC wishes them luck. Perhaps the thugs will not get away with their mischief this time, and no damage to scientific research facilities will materialize. IWMC supports all legitimate scientific research and urges everyone to support law enforcement efforts to thwart terrorism, no matter what its focus.

UN Secretary General calls for cooperation between Scientists and the United Nations

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has used the internationally known journal, *SCIENCE*, (V 299) to send a plea to the world scientific community. In his open letter, Secretary General Annan notes that there is a significant disparity between developed and developing nations in the matter of government funding for scientific research, number of scientists per citizen, and the amount of attention paid by scientists to human health and water safety matters. Developing countries often send their brightest students to developed nations in order to receive their science education, because poor nations have fewer resources with which to educate anyone, even though their need for scientific expertise is certainly desperate. IWMC and Mr. Annan hope to see this disparity resolved in the near future.

Mr. Annan noted that science is built upon rational thinking and informed reason, as was the United Nations itself, and therefore, it is only natural that the world scientific community and the United Nations should cooperate closely in working to solve desperate problems of human health, and problems of grave concern over degradation of natural environments. He also deplored the

fact of war as a disruptive force in the world, and hopes that with peace, attention can once again be turned to improving the condition of people who need scientific help in solving their day to day and future health and development problems.



IWMC agrees with the Secretary General that it is natural for the scientific community and the international political community within the United Nations, to form a closer partnership for the benefit of mankind. Both global science and the United Nations are based on reason and the quest for betterment through greater knowledge. Our best wishes for the fulfillment of Secretary Annan's hopes and dreams in this regard.

Woolly Tale weaves Hope in New Zealand

There is a bin full of good news from New Zealand regarding their brushy tailed opossum fur industry. This beast is not native to New Zealand, but was imported years ago from Australia. In New Zealand, it has done tremendous ecological damage, eating native vegetation to the roots. For awhile, people trapped or shot the invaders, and sold the pelts on the international fur market. Then, unfortunately, the anti-fur activist network decided to make use of the fact that most New Zealanders are of British extraction, and of course we know, that the British have always been vulnerable to the campaigns of animal rights extremists. Possum trapping was for awhile, outlawed in New Zealand.

The subsequent lack of control led to an environmental problem of increasing proportion, threatening the very existence of native species, both faunal and floral. Common sense has now prevailed. New Zealand legislators have changed the law, so that trapping is legal and actually, encouraged. Until recently, the market for possum fur has seen wild swings varying from high demand to no demand, so that trappers have seen an unstable income situation, and many times, trapped animals have been unsold, and left to rot. At times there was no financial incentive to exploit this animal while it did vast damage to the countryside.

That situation has dramatically improved with the growing popularity of a new technique for using the fur. Instead of always processing it on the skin, in the traditional manner, some furriers have begun to knit it in the manner of wool, treating it as a fabric instead of a leather-based product. Although the animal rightists have felt extremely threatened by

this, screaming "Fur is Not a Fabric!", they have not prevailed. It is a very attractive, light weight, warm fabric that is extremely "environmentally friendly".

Now a New Zealand company, Basically Bush, has agreed to buy opossum fur both on and off the pelt, to accommodate both kinds of market demand. Basically Bush has signed contractual agreements with two supplier companies, Snowy Peak and Woolyarns, so that trappers who are saving their environment from this menace can now rely on steady year-round sales to supplement their income. Snowy Peak and Woolyarns will buy product from the trapper producers, and can rely on selling it all to Basically Bush, all year round.

In this manner, two problems are solved. The environmental degradation will be increasingly checked by year round trapping in a steady manner. Trappers will be assured of a steady, reliable income. This is in contrast to the wide fluctuations in supply and demand that previously characterized the opossum control/trapping business, with waste of the menace-turned-resource being common.

But there is even better news: The opossum fur business, now a \$100 million dollar a year industry, is expected to reach \$200 million soon, thanks to the agreements within the industry, and to the technological innovations of knitting the fur. New Zealand brushy tailed opossum (formerly from Australia) has finally been transformed into a resource for New Zealanders. They are all to be congratulated on solving their problem in this innovative manner. Way to Go, New Zealand!

Sustainable Use notes from around the World

While fishermen and Inuit in Canada are wishing for renewed markets for seal pelts, fishermen's organizations in Scotland are deploring the reluctance of their government to allow culls of the gray and harbor seals on their coasts. A cull is a regulated large scale kill of animals for which no known use or commercial interest exists. Culls are done to bring populations into line with prey or other forage resources. In the case of Scotland, approximately 110,000 gray seals and 40,000 harbor seals have been shown, thanks to DNA analysis of their feces, to be depleting the trout and salmon also fished by people. Anglers' groups are demanding that these growing seal populations be controlled.

Problem is, such a cull would cost money and would be protested by animal extremists.

We offer a couple of ideas for a solution: Although their meat and hides are not commercially valuable for human use, these seals could be a welcomed source of protein for animal feeds, whether pet, swine, or poultry. Their fat and protein should not go to waste, and those who remove them should be compensated within the world economic system. This type of use might also apply to the by-products of harp seals, whose pelts are not selling as well as they were formerly, being in competition with other fur products in an overabundance situation. Seal carcasses not consumed by people would make good food for pets, poultry and pigs. Best wishes to anyone who can make this happen!

The people of the Faroes have missed having the meat of baleen whales. They haven't fished for minke or other local baleen species

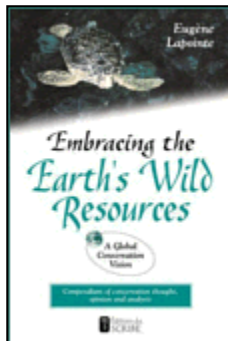
since the 1980s. Now, plans are underway for Norway to allow the export of minke product to the Faroes this coming summer. Although the Faroese hunters take 950 pilot whales per year, they want some variety in their meat diet. Their only other locally produced meat products are sheep and fish. Pilot whales make up 30% of all meat produced in the Faroes. The Faroese, Norwegians, Japanese and Icelanders are all exempt from CITES restrictions on trade in minke whale products, and our Faroese friends are looking forward to this newly restored diet opportunity.

Congratulations to Norway and the Faroes for going ahead with sovereign courage on this project. No harm will be done, a principle will be upheld, and local people will enjoy the result. Bon appetit!

In late February 2003 the Committee on Fisheries of the UN Food and Agricultural Organization met in Rome. Topics discussed included promotion of sustainable use of marine resources, and problems with illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities, and ways to correct that situation. The FAO's COFI endorsed Japan's proposal that FAO should convene a Technical Consultation in early 2004 to address these problems and the problem of international management of fishing capacity. Also discussed were recognized problems with sea turtle mortality due to fishing and other human activities, and the contributions of fishing communities in solving wider problems. These include reporting of ecosystem dangers, border patrol security, and coastal clean-ups.

Earlier in February, Indonesia, Japan and Norway announced that they had filed a reservation to the recent CITES Appendix II listing of whale sharks, basking sharks, and sea horses, while Iceland filed a reservation for sharks only. The reservation was filed on grounds that there is no scientific justification for the listing. Thus, the principle that the various CITES appendices listings must be based on scientific evidence of species abundance or depletion, was highlighted, and a precedent of acceptance of political basis for listing was upset. IWMC applauds Iceland, Indonesia, Japan and Norway for sticking to principle on this matter, for the good of respect for the scientific community, and because such an action upholds the principles of the Convention. We support such actions, because science must be the basis for all wildlife and fisheries management decisions.

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Embracing the Earth's Wild Resources by Eugene Lapointe

A Compendium of conservation thought, opinion and analysis.
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