

Sustainable eNews

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IWMC

World Conservation Trust

Editorial: CITES Preview

by Jaques Berney

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The 13th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora will be held in Bangkok, Thailand, from October 2 through October 14. The Parties will consider some 50 proposals, the disposition of which may affect the population status of entire species, their habitats, and in some cases, the culture and livelihood of many thousands of people in many nations.

Goals of the Convention are to identify species and stocks that are at risk, as well as those that have recovered from depletion, and to consider classifying those species and stocks in a manner appropriate to their sustained success in the environment. Classifications of species and stocks in the CITES system are meant to protect them from inappropriate exploitation through interna-



tional trade, and to release them from inappropriate restrictions on such trade when it becomes apparent that they can sustain increased exploitation. The role of scientists in dedicated working groups is crucial to the process, and the recommendations of these working groups should be seen as those of experts who have focused on specific data sets in each situation. Thus, there is a crocodile expert group, a group of experts that is well versed in the problems of elephant management in southern Africa, working groups on plant and timber species, coral and shellfish, and groups that may become involved with the continuing issue of cetacean management, which has not been progressively handled at the IWC.

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A common theme at CITES, unfortunately, is development of polarity between proponents of scientifically supported sustainable use, and proponents of policies of no use, and consequently, no trade, in certain categories of high profile species. Elephants, big cats, turtle species, and cetaceans top this list, while substances derived from certain plant species are now beginning to receive increased attention.

IWMC has long been an active participant in the CITES process, and has published recommendations on a number of the current CoP13 proposals, based on the history of each species use, on the experts' assessment of each population status, and on the likelihood that any degree of international trade would result in an adverse impact, no impact, or in increased conservation benefit. Sometimes, the recommendation has had to take into consideration whether or not the lifting of

trade restrictions on the species in question would result in harm to a look-alike species. These recommendations have all been made after thorough examination of biological data, and with consultation where appropriate on matters of the adequacy of law enforcement in range States and in importing States.

IWMC anticipates with pleasure the upcoming Conference of the Parties, and we shall be in Bangkok to once again, observe and to participate in this increasingly sophisticated scientific, economic and political process. We believe that the Parties are capable of continuing success in ensuring sustainable use of the world's natural resources, and we shall work to support this process through scientific and diplomatic channels. Good Luck and Best Wishes to all CoP13 Parties. May we all work together in the best spirit of conservation.

The Fishermen's Dilemma

The SAMUDRA News Alert for 11–18 September indicates that there is a serious problem in coastal Ceara, Brazil. The problem apparently has two causes: Fishermen claim that for 15 years there has been inadequate law enforcement on this coast with the result that harvest of undersize lobsters by outsiders has diminished the resource. A contributing factor may be that undersize lobsters are illegally imported into the US.

Three non-governmental organizations are calling on their own government and on that of the US to improve law enforcement, so that their lobster fishery can be saved. Some 10,000 lobster fishermen and their families depend on this resource, which is diminishing markedly due to the illegal take of immature



lobsters. In addition, the justice system in their area is apparently inadequate to the task of timely prosecution of law breakers, so the problem continues unabated. Lobster fishermen are willing to contribute about twenty-five cents per lobster to a fund that their government could use to build a law enforcement and coastal management authority to solve this problem.

Not knowing what else to do, NGO representatives of the fishermen have contacted American restaurants, asking them to advise the US Government to curtail the import of undersize lobsters. This would be done by the US Commerce Department and NOAA, under the auspices of the Lacey Act.

The fishermen blame their government for allowing “predatory fishing” by outsiders in their coastal areas. They need an uncorrupted coastal management authority to prevent this, and to ensure them preferential access to coastal resources, so that the lobster fishery can recover, and they can rebuild their livelihoods.

IWMC supports the SAMUDRA practice of bringing these problems to light. The Ceara coast of Brazil is not unique in being an example of poor or non-existent management.

Nations have to agree to cooperate with each other in order to discourage corruption and to ensure sustainability of seafood resources.

What would happen IF?

Since the IWC meeting in Sorrento this past July, a number of observers of the whaling dispute process have wondered just what will happen next. Japan has been very patient, and very steadfast in the belief that if enough countries are recruited to understand Japan’s position, and to support it, that the day will come when the IWC Plenary shall vote to lift the moratorium on commercial whaling. However, if that day does not come within the next meeting, then what?

In 2005 it will have been 23 years since the moratorium was voted into effect. No real progress has been made, and we note that the vote numbers regarding whaling still show that the member States are strongly polarized on the issue. If the Revised Management Scheme is not adopted in the 2005 meeting, Japan has stated that it “has a very important decision to make”. Other nations have stated that even if the RMS is agreed upon and adopted, that this does not mean an automatic levying of quotas for minke or any other species. The opponents intend to stonewall this issue indefinitely. There is no diplomatic environment here, no civilized spirit of compromise and respect for either science or for cultural traditions.

The arguments

Japan’s arguments that commercial whaling for minke should resume immediately are based in a number of facts: minke whales are

extremely abundant, and the RMP formula for quotas of the various stocks are very conservative. Those fulfilled quotas would not affect minke stocks one way or the other. Japan has a several thousand year history of harvest of minke and other whales (also abundant today) for food. The cultural expectation of coastal peoples in Japan is that their government will prevail in this matter, and will win for them the right and the international recognition that their ancient whaling traditions shall again be honored and fulfilled.



Japan’s scientific research has clearly indicated that minke, sei, Brydes and sperm whales around Japan are abundant to the point that they are a significant factor in the local marine ecosystem. If the IWC does not very soon concede that Japan is justified in the yearly proposals that resumption of commercial whaling should immediately begin, the Japanese people expect that their government may finally leave this irrational organization, and give its citizens permission to conduct whaling in a regulated manner once again. At that point, the IWC Parties would no longer have any control over this major whaling nation. The organization will have failed in its mission to cooperate with all nations in whale conservation.

IWC blurred future

Where would that leave the IWC? Perhaps the body would concentrate on regulation of whale watching. Norway conducts regulated commercial minke whaling, and has suffered no significant adverse political or economic consequences. Iceland conducts very limited scientific research whaling, and no actual political or economic harm has resulted. Iceland may watch this process with Japan play out, and decide to follow suit. Her people need to manage their whales as well as their fish stocks, and they recognize that minke in the North Atlantic have a significant ecological impact.



Japan's deputy commissioner stated in the Sorrento meeting, "We will never give up!" Some media present have quoted Komatsu in this instance, and report that the world believes Japan is going to resume commercial whaling very soon, regardless. It may be through finally garnering enough votes to achieve the needed $\frac{3}{4}$ majority to amend the Schedule, to accept the RMS and to even set quotas for minke. Or, it may be that Japan shall strike out on its own, to satisfy its people and correct the perceived

ecosystem imbalances that Japanese scientists have been recording in the last few years.

Sovereign Rights of a Nation

One way or the other, the Japanese whalers will go to sea again and will bring the products back home to market in their coastal towns. And because Japan wisely took a reservation on the Antarctic whale sanctuary some years ago, her large ships will again ply the Southern ocean, not only to complete and continue scientific research projects in those waters, but to finally bring home the minke product for commercial sale in the amounts that scientists have recommended – and again, those quotas fulfilled shall not adversely affect minke whale stocks in any region of the Antarctic.

IWMC strongly supports Japan in these attempts to finally win the $\frac{3}{4}$ majority necessary in the IWC, and we support Japan in proposals at CITES, that minke whales should be placed on Appendix II where they belong, according to biological criteria. We believe that Japan is morally justified in stating that the nation will never give up on its quest to conduct scientifically justified, culturally important commercial whaling in the very near future.

Philippines Fisheries Regulations A Role Model for the World

The Philippine government's Department of Agriculture has announced a one year moratorium on the issuing of new licenses for fishing vessels, in an attempt to comply with the FAO's International Plan of Action for the management of fishing capacity.

The moratorium on new vessels and gear will give authorities time to assess the



stocks and habitat health of fisheries in the Philippines, and at the same time, an effort to conduct an inventory of fishing capacity will be made through a registration of all vessels and major gear. Registration of all currently licensed vessels and gear will be conducted up through October 29, and on October 30th, the one-year moratorium shall begin. No unregistered vessels shall be allowed to fish. No new vessels may be licensed during the one-year moratorium.

This action is in response to a reported decline in tuna resources in recent years. The Government of the Philippines is working in cooperation with the wider tuna industry and with the United Nations FAO, to assess and conserve all fishery resources, with the focus being on tuna. The national tuna industry supports this move. We are reminded of the sacrifices endured by Japan in support of its own tuna resources, when it mothballed a significant percentage of its own tuna fleet, after determining that national tuna fishing capacity was inappropriate to the condition of the resource.

These efforts by the Department of Agriculture in the Philippines may not result in such drastic measures, but they are a courageous and appropriate start to assess the condition of the nation's fishery.

Congratulations and best wishes to the fishermen of the Philippines, as they embark upon this period of voluntary cessation of growth of their fishing capacity. They are enhancing the future sustainability of all their fishery resources through this economically and politically difficult measure.

LUNA is not another WILLY

Orcas are social animals, top predators in their environment, and when they are deprived of their fellows, their behavior tends to be dysfunctional – both for them and for their surroundings. A young male orca in Nootka Sound has been found to be solitary, having lost contact with its natal pod when the rest of the animals migrated out of there. It apparently needs companionship of some kind, and unfortunately, it has apparently substituted fishing boats for its natural companions.

The animal, now named Luna for the time being, has become a dangerous menace to fishing and tour boats that enter the waters it feels are its territory. Luna intentionally rams, bumps, and in other ways, continually encounters boats, causing structural damage and significant fear on the part of the boaters.

A plan to capture this animal and transport it to what is believed to be its natal pod, was frustrated during the last few months by another development. Native Canadians say that their late chief declared that when he

died, he would “come back” to the tribe as a local orca male. Sure enough, Luna appeared shortly after his demise. When DFO officials attempted to herd the animal into a sea pen, angry Mowachaht/Muchalaht men in canoes came on the scene and prevented the animal's capture.



Recently, the Government of Canada and the Mowachaht people got together on a satisfactory compromise that appears to solve the danger-to-boats problem. The DFO has ordered that area of Nootka Sound off limits to fishing and tour boats, and the Mowachaht people shall monitor the animal and report any boating violations that occur.

Luna shall not be subject to further capture attempts for the time being, and an atmosphere of respect for Native beliefs seems to have been given priority over concerns that the animal be reunited with its orca relatives.

This clash of cultures has been halted for the time being, and the orca Luna is not being artificially housed or fed, as was the unfortunate Willy. No one can predict whether or not this animal may be reunited with its pod if the pod should return to the area. Canada and the Mowachaht people are perhaps wisely letting nature run its course in this instance.

Congratulations to the two parties to this diplomatic and humane effort. They have treated each other's perspectives with respect and dignity and both feel they are doing the right thing as prescribed by their respective laws in each case.

Well done, Canada and the Mowachaht/
Muchalaht.

Noteworthy

Oct. 22-24, 2004: People, Wildlife and Hunting: Emerging Conservation Paradigms

This international conference, focused primarily on the North American Arctic and Northwest, will be of interest those involved in sustainable use and management of wildlife, conservation-hunting, and culturally-appropriate social and economic development in local communities. The conference program and other information is available on the conference website at www.conservationhunting.ca or by contacting the conference office at mf2@ualberta.ca, Telephone: (1)-780-492-4682, Fax: (1)-780-492-1153.

9-13 May 2005: The 5th International Symposium on Sturgeon will take place in Iran with four Workshops:

- 1 - Sturgeon sperm cryopreservation
- 2 - Sturgeon sexing and gonad staging
- 3 - Caviar processing
- 4 - Diseases and parasites in Sturgeon

For further information, please contact the Symposium Secretariat at:
www.sturgeonsymposium2005.org or at www.iss5.org

IWMC Bookstore: In Defense of Hunting by James A. Swan / www.jameswan.com

In **Defense of Hunting** probes the soul of hunting, showing how hunting is instinctual in human nature, and for some modern men and women hunting becomes a passion guided by the highest spiritual ethics and values.



The book refutes unfounded charges of the anti-hunting movement and weaves stories and facts into an interpretation of the hunter's soul, showing how for traditional and modern passionate hunters hunting becomes an act of love for nature.

eNewsletter Notice:

During October, the eNews will not be published as such, and will not be sent out to our friends and supporters via email. In October, news of the on-going CITES Conference of the Parties #13 will be posted on the IWMC.org website.



Subscriptions / Submissions

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A global voice for sustainable use of the earth's resources and the preservation of the cultures and traditions that depend upon them.