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IWMC
World Conservation Trust

Editorial: Seal Fishery Project

by Kurtis Coombs, Newfoundland

My name is Kurtis Coombs I am a 14-year old grade 9 student. I live in St. John', Newfoundland, the capital city of the seal hunt. I am doing a project on the Seal Fishery and I was very glad to see an article in The Telegram today that your organization is in support of this fishery and eager to take action against these activists.

I have been interviewing various government members regarding this fishery and was hoping to get something in writing from you in regards to this issue. After all the researching I have done, I have looked at the activists' view, the federal and provincial governments' view, and the sealers' view of this fishery. It seems to me that the activists ignore the facts totally.



Year after year the hunt is changed and progresses to be as humane as possible but the activists are still singing the same old song from when they first started in the seventies. I believe the resolution to this controversy is for both our governments to work together with the sealers and come up with campaigns to counter act the activists' claims and educate people to the real facts. Seeing this article today makes me optimistic that maybe someone else on the outside of this issue could help get the government and the sealers together and make an unbeatable army to fight the sealing war.

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Our fishermen no longer have the cod fishery to live on, so the sealing fishery is more important to them now than it ever has been in history. I hope you and your organization can help Newfoundland and Labrador turn this hunt into a fully viable commercial industry as it should be.

Thank you for your time and good luck,
Kurtis Coombs



Carry on, Canada

by Janice Henke, Anthropologist

The seal hunt protest has been tested again, and again, it has failed to get the attention that its organizers had hoped for. Perhaps a retrospective look at the way these protest events turned out is in order; no major news organizations treated these events as if they were "news". Perhaps this is because so few people took part in them. Perhaps mainstream media feel that the events are orchestrated tightly but that even the ranks of those who turn out to declare that they are believers, are so few that there is nothing of social significance going on. And quite possibly, the word has gotten out to the media that the protest claims are entirely bogus.

As for the traditional threat that the seal protesters pose to Canadian fish exports; this does not appear to have any significant economic impact. People in major cities who want to eat fish are going to buy their traditional cuts and species, just as they always have. When this boycott was attempted in the early 1980s, it failed to make any difference in consumer patterns and it failed to have an effect on the marine management policies of the government of Canada. And this continues to be true, in spite of the fact that protest advertising continues to use the whitecoat pup image. That icon of the animal rights movement is just as appealing as ever, but it does not seem to influence enough people to make a difference. Perhaps the general public has realized that the image

is a marketing tool, rather than a symbol of something that is terribly amiss. It has been over twenty years since the EU ban on the import of the products of seals under the age of one year. The market for seals is now outside of Europe, and Europeans miss the business. Perhaps they have learned their lesson.

It is also possible that the majority of the general public is now aware that lies are continually told about the hunt. This year's claims that some 40% of seals are skinned alive, is such a blatant falsehood that perhaps it has fallen flat on its face. It is simply too bad to be true.

In addition, it is possible that sophistication of the general public is now at a level that exceeds all previous expectation. The Internet is a powerful marketing tool, but it is also being recognized as a forum without any reliable editorial control. The website of the Canadian government's Department of Fisheries and Oceans is an excellent dash of cold water on the heated and silly rhetoric of all the "save the seal" protest sites. At this time, the failure of this year's seal hunt protest efforts is probably due to a number of factors. Whatever they are, we welcome this as a promising trend in public response to the false accusations and malicious claims that have been made. Carry on, Canada.

Greenpeace has cried Wolf - too many times already. Get a real issue!

Pity the poor sea bass. It has big fishy eyes and no forebrain, and will never leap for food held by the fingers of aquarium employees. So no one apparently cares that it is being scooped out of its environment with trawl nets suspended between two ships full of Frenchmen, or full of UK fishermen. It may be surviving quite nicely and the harvest of it may be entirely sustainable. Or not. The EU Fisheries Management Plan, if it is really operable, may contain data on its abundance. Or not. But is Greenpeace out in the English Channel in “rigid inflatables” trying to bring attention to the plight of hundreds of thousands of sea bass and other fish species? No.

Greenpeace is out in the Channel in rigid inflatables, backed up by their ship Esperanza, putting metal junk in the way of pair trawlers, because of their concern for the dolphins that are by-catch of the trawl operation. As far as we are aware, there is no solid data base of stock abundance or scarcity for either the fish or the dolphins of that area.

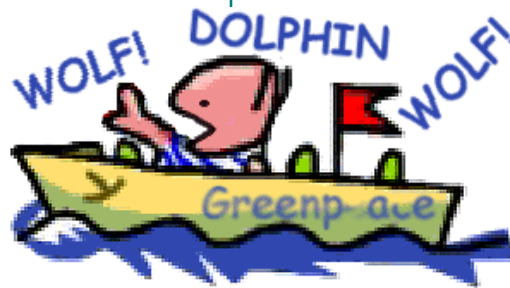
If Greenpeace is concerned solely about the dolphin by-catch, they might at least publish their biologically based reasons for that concern, and take them to the EU Parliament. But they have not shown any biological data indicating that dolphins are endangered at this time, or that the by-catch definitely or even probably, constitutes a threat to their continued existence. The fishermen are understandably outraged that some fools in small boats are motoring purposefully in the path of the trawlers, endangering themselves and slowing or stopping the fishing operation. They are also outraged at the sight of buoys

with drag hooks, chains and other obstructing paraphernalia being purposefully put in their path, to damage their engine props and their nets.

Even if the fishing operation is fully documented as sustainable for both species, however, Greenpeace would be out there protesting that dolphins are being inadvertently killed. If the biology doesn't back them up on the endangerment issue, they will protest that it is cruel that they are killed in this manner, because it is “inhumane” when they are “mutilated” by the trawls. Greenpeace is not calling for any specific modification of the trawl technology to decrease the by-catch of dolphins.

Meanwhile, Greenpeace volunteers are endangering themselves and others in this endeavor, in order to attract the attention of the press, and so bolster their Internet campaign against pair trawl operations. Pair trawls must be extremely efficient, compared to single trawl operations, or they would not be conducted. More fish per unit of effort is one measure of catch efficiency.

The UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency has objected to both the alleged firing of flares at the Greenpeacers, and to the allegations that Greenpeacers have purposefully put out metal junk in the English Channel to obstruct the trawlers. Both parties to the dispute have been given letters of warning and or reprimand.



IWMC World Conservation Trust wants the world to know that there is a welcome trend in thought about fishing operations. They should be proven sustainable with the best available science, and the goals should be sustainability of entire ecosystems, not just target species. This is an attainable goal. Individual species, all examined with valid statistical methods, and analyzed by biologists, who examine stock age profiles, can continue to be used sustainably for the benefit of people.

Individual species that are cult objects (such as dolphins) deserve the same consideration because they are also, an integral part of the marine environment. They do not deserve special treatment merely because members of

the public, spurred on by special interest groups, then contact their politicians and demand special protection for dolphins at the expense of the economic and food security quests of others.

This is not our fathers' ocean. Because of the modern innovations in fishing technology, ecological conditions are changing constantly, and fishermen need to concede that their operations should be subject to ongoing research, and human fisheries should then proceed accordingly. When this is an established fact of life then fish and whales, dolphins, seabirds and fishermen, shall all prosper. Maybe someday, even Greenpeace will work towards this goal.

Noteworthy: Time to tell the truth, again by Sunita Narain

The extraordinary diversity of India flora and fauna is not about 'pristine nature' but the result of millennia of human-nature interaction. This article is available on the IWMC website:

www.iwmc.org



Out of Africa

Sudan and Kenya, Chad, Congo and Central African Republic all need to exercise Sovereign Authority for the Conservation of Elephants

Perhaps global governance of wildlife resources is a concept that should be reconsidered for the sake of sound conservation goals and principles. CITES has long had control of the trade, hence the management, of Africa's elephants. The 2/3 majority needed to win a vote on management plans and restrictions or lessening controls on

the trade in elephants, has for years been an obstacle to some modern conceptions of sub-Saharan wildlife management. Those concepts include sustainable use of animals when they become too abundant to be compatible with the environment and the people in it.

Global governance began as an idea that seemed to have positive elements. Concerned nations of the world, united for conservation principles, joined CITES, thinking that together they would put rational restrictions on international wildlife and plant trade and thus contribute to those conservation practices that are affected by it. Bans on trade, however, were the solutions sought for various reasons by some of the Parties. Bans have not been a very satisfactory answer to elephant conservation in southern Africa.



Recently, several developments have been reported in the news out of the continent:

News 24.com reports that Botswana's president Festus Mogae was planning to hold talks with Zambian president Levi Mwanawasa regarding cooperation between the two elephant range states in requesting that CITES downgrade the status of their elephants, so that Botswana officials could conduct a cull to bring the herds down to "acceptable levels", and then sell the ivory from that cull action.

Botswana is said to have "huge herds" of elephants that are destroying the environment. In Zambia, where poaching used to be intensive, they are becoming a problem. Zambia asked for a transfer of its population to Appendix II only once, in 2002. This was not granted, but this means only that the text should be slightly changed, not that the request was not justified.

Each CITES meeting has seen them urging for relief through being allowed to sell ivory from animals culled by the government, or ivory from natural mortality. In 2002, CITES voted to allow Botswana, Namibia and

Zimbabwe to sell 60 metric tons in a one-time sale. At the latest CITES meeting, objectors to a new cull argued that excess animals should be physically transferred to areas where they are scarcer. This is an expensive and questionably humane practice.

Kenya is traditionally against any ivory sales from culled animals, arguing that such sales would encourage poachers. Kenyan elephants are steadily recovering from the effects of poaching that took place through the 1980s.

However, poaching is still taking place in Kenya, and CITES MIKE (Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants) investigators know that this is because there is a booming market for illegal ivory in Sudan. They allege that Sudanese army personnel are not only conducting the illegal kills, but are transporting the ivory to the Sudanese capital for export to China. The illegal trade is facilitated by the large Chinese population in Sudan, where between 3,000 and 5,000 Chinese work in the mining, oil and construction industries. Chinese demand is growing because the nation has experienced such marked economic growth in recent years, and the money is available for such luxury goods imports.

Nigel Hunter, MIKE director, has called on Sudan to control its people's involvement in this illegal trade. Others have noted that shops in Khartoum are openly advertising ivory artifacts in their stores. Despite Kenya's insistence that other countries control their traders, Nairobi stores contain ivory as well. Authorities note that elephants are being illegally killed in southern Sudan, Congo and the Central African Republic, Kenya, and Chad.

Elephant conservation ultimately depends on regional cooperation and transparency in conservation law enforcement, and it appears that CITES-maintained bans on ivory from culled animals and animals that die of natural causes, have not been effective in stopping the illegal international trade in these goods. Those nations whose citizens have been involved in this illegal trade need to either strictly control it under the CITES regime, or make the decision that they are going to protect their resources through a regional plan that is effective through integrity and hard work. Age old traditions of secretly

sanctioned “under the table” deals have not escaped international notice, and ultimately, they are not a benefit to the people of those countries, their environments, and their animal resources.

IWMC urges that all range states cooperate in the effort to prove they can effectively enforce laws that serve elephant conservation, and perhaps ultimately, they may be able to create a regional African management plan that works for the benefit of all those who share the environment with the diversity of unique wildlife that is the essence of Africa.

Rural Lifestyles and Income Strategies are Adaptations to Local Resource Opportunities – the Result is Self Sufficiency

Twenty or thirty years ago people thought most poor rural families earned their living by farming. Then studies showed that off-farm income from wage labor, craft work, small-scale trading, and money sent by relatives was actually more important. That cast rural poverty in a rather different light.

Now, a new World Bank report called ‘Counting on the Environment, Forest Incomes, and the Rural Poor’ has highlighted a third major source of income – collecting fuel wood, wild foods, and other forest products. It says that, on average, such activities provide roughly one fifth of poor rural families’ income.

The report, by P. Vedeld, A. Angelsen, E. Sjaastad, and G. Kobugabe Berg from the Norwegian Agricultural University, synthesizes data from 54 household income studies from 17 countries, mostly in East and Southern Africa and South Asia. Wet, semi-humid, and dry forest areas were about equally represented among the studies,

although most humid forest cases involved indigenous peoples in Latin America.

About two-fifths of the income from these activities comes from harvesting wild foods (bushmeat, insects, and wild fruits and vegetables), while another third comes from fuel wood. Fodder, medicinal plants, and timber provided much of the rest. The income is about evenly split between cash and products consumed directly. Wealthier families harvest more forest products. However, these activities generate a much higher proportion of poorer families’ total income. Those villagers with lower educational levels get more of their income from forests.



The authors note that many of the studies reviewed had weak methodologies. More sophisticated survey techniques are needed, but that will require additional funding. Nonetheless, based on what we know already there is little doubt that rural incomes are higher than existing statistics suggest. Poverty Reduction Strategies need to help ensure that rural households don't lose those sources of income that are crucial both to survival and to self sufficiency.

It is a sad fact of life that a significant proportion of people who live in highly developed western countries tend to look with scorn at rural people who live in relative poverty, as if their life styles are somehow "their fault". When rural people make good use of their local resources, this often consists of selling products both within and outside the country to supplement their meager incomes. Such is the case with those people who live



on the Atlantic coast of Canada and make use of both fish and seals. The fish are a staple commodity for coastal people, while the seals are harvested for supplemental income during the early spring, when it is impossible to fish because of ice conditions. Here also, local people make use of local forest products when these are available, but seals are an indispensable part of the food gathering cycle. Newfoundlanders

and Inuit people eat seal meat. The sale of the pelts and fat, however, tides them over a bleak, long season without any income.

Urban Americans and Europeans behave as though this use of a resource in times of scarcity is somehow immoral. It is not that the seals are scarce or even endangered. They are over-abundant, thanks to the loss of a market for their pelts in Europe back in the 1980s and through 1996. Finally, new markets were found and Canadians can once again earn a decent living in the spring of the year. This finances the start of the new fishing season, for Newfoundlanders, and brings hope to Labrador Native people who have no other source of cash.

All societies live in the global economy. All people deserve to participate in it in the most benign and efficient manner they can devise. Local abundant resources make this possible. Whether it is forest foods, or sea foods, rural people "make do" with whatever tradition has taught them is available. Their self sufficiency should be universally applauded, rather than scorned and held up to criticism. Cultural and economic diversity in the use of resources helps to keep all resource gathering activities sustainable. IWMC applauds all those rural people who know how to take care of themselves through skillful use of their own natural resources. This is "economic development" at its best.

6th World Congress Seafood Safety, Quality & Trade

14-16 September 2005 / Sydney, Australia / www.iafi.net/congress

The International Association of Fish Inspectors (IAFI) has invited Seafood Services Australia (SSA) and the New Zealand Seafood Industry Council (NZSIC) to jointly host the 6th World Congress on Seafood Safety, Quality and Trade (formerly the World Fish Inspection & Quality Control Congress). This will be the first time the Congress has been held in the Southern Hemisphere.



World Conservation Trust Foundation (WCTF)

IWMC has established the World Conservation Trust Foundation (WCTF) to raise money for the sustainable use of wildlife. WCTF is registered in Washington, DC and has charitable status. We invite you to visit:

www.conservingwildlife.org

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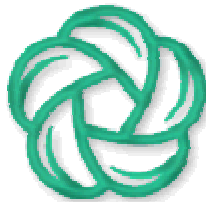
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