

# Sustainable eNews

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Promoting Sustainable Use

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IWMC

World Conservation Trust

## Editorial:

### **Bans on trade in wildlife are not appropriate conservation tools** by Eugene Lapointe

The European Union has decided to reject a call from the wildlife protectionist community for a ban on the import of wild birds. IWMC applauds the wisdom and strength of conviction that is evident in this decision. 224 environmental nongovernmental organizations from Europe and other nations issued a lengthy statement to the EU in which they outlined their reasons for demanding a ban on wild bird imports from developing countries.

The World Parrot Trust sent the demands via email to EU Commission President Barroso on December 9, 2004. This outlined the details of the “European Union Wild Bird Declaration”.



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The list of protectionists includes all the “big guns” as well as dozens of small and virtually unknown NGOs that together, make up a network of those who advocate an end to all trade in wild species. Their arguments in favor of a trade and import ban include doubts that species conservation can be carried out concurrent with sustainable use, and that species of concern might become extirpated in the wild due to the wild bird trade. The NGOs also claim that their animal welfare concerns are of significance, due to alleged poor handling of wild birds in transit, with resultant high mortality and suffering. Further justifications for a ban, according to the network, include human health concerns such as transference of bird diseases (avian influenza) to people. They add allegations that Newcastle Disease is likely to be imported, thus endangering the domestic poultry industry in the twenty-five EU member nations.

In addition, the protectionist document includes the standard anti-use NGO claim that any trade encourages fraud, corruption of officials, and dishonest reports regarding the legality of conditions for trade in wild species. Their standard prescription for overcoming such alleged behavior is a total ban on the import of wild birds, as if that would be an automatic “cure all” for the alleged ills described.

The EU issued a reply to the request for a ban that covers all the above concerns and more. Robert Madelin, Director General of the European Commission Health and Consumer Protection Division, responded to the NGO document himself, and his comments were



supplemented by those of his colleagues, who are Directorate Generals of Environment, Trade and Development of the Commission.

The document, entitled “Reply to the ‘European Union Wild Bird Declaration’” covers all the concerns mentioned by the NGO document, and declares that “Protecting Europeans and European agriculture from the threat of infectious diseases while at the same time protecting wild birds and promoting sustainable use of wildlife resources in developing countries is an issue of high priority to the EU.”

The European Union already has measures in place that sufficiently address all the concerns of the NGO network. The measures that ensure compliance with CITES are a part of this, as well as specific EU restrictions on import that include certified periods of animal quarantine in the exporting country, with veterinary inspections and evidentiary documents, and mandatory periods of quarantine in the EU importing state, with similar veterinary oversight measures. Therefore, fears of avian influenza and Newcastle Disease are not realistic. The EU Commission Director General for Health and Consumer Protection and his colleagues note that if a ban were instituted, it would not necessarily constitute a safer environment for Europeans because of the likelihood of a black market in wild birds that could be established, in which event, none of the veterinary oversight would be applied that presently protects the EU Community.

It appears that this call for a ban on import of wild birds to the EU is patterned after the formula that protectionist NGOs apply to all wildlife use issues. It alleges harm to both people and to wildlife, claims that cruelty is inherent and that damage to wild populations is an inevitable result of international trade and use.

The allegations that the wild bird trade is conducted only with endemic fraud and corruption are typical of the ploy that anti-use NGOs always use to pit nations against one another. NGOs nearly always try to cause distrust among governments, in order to lessen the frequency of State-to-state diplomacy and intergovernmental treaties and pacts of mutual trust. This, in our opinion, is

part of the power play that such organizations continually attempt in order to lessen the communication and cooperation among governments in furthering mutual conservation agreements.

IWMC applauds the EU and the Commission for resisting this latest NGO move to interfere with EU policies that are a part of international conservation and trade. Congratulations to the EU and all its directors general for their coordinated and thoughtful response to this unconstructive and potentially harmful NGO demand.



## A Cruel Shepherd

The recent disaster in which four people, including two young children, were lost at sea has been turned into a media opportunity by a notoriously irresponsible anti-use NGO. Paul Watson, head of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, has once again offended many people with one of his outrageous statements to the press: Watson is quoted in the Anchorage Daily News (May 9, 2005 Joel Gay) as stating that the Mayor of Gambell and other adults on a whaling expedition “killed” the two children by allowing them to go along on a whaling expedition in which one bowhead was killed.

Of course, the village of Gambell and the other native residents of Alaska have reacted angrily to this claim. The grieving survivors in Gambell have demanded an apology, but Watson never apologizes for his behavior. He never tries to be a nice man, because he sees himself as different from ordinary, decent

human beings. His “job” is to denounce the cultural worth of any societies that involve taking marine mammals, and certainly, any traditions that involve training the next generation to carry on age-old survival skills.

Although life jackets are not a part of the whaling culture in Alaska, some people there are now considering their use, even though they may be bulky and inconvenient. Yet, life jackets alone would not save a person immersed in the icy waters of the far North. Native whalers are well acquainted with the dangers that are a part of their hunt. They teach their youngsters that danger and hardship are a normal part of life for those who learn to live on the resources of both land and sea. The reward of the hunt is providing for the community, and the joys of knowing that once again, people have overcome obstacles through ancient skills.

Although Watson himself has rammed ships at sea in his quest for attention, he now declares that the Gambell expedition should have used life jackets and should have left the kids at home. We have not heard him comment on another tragedy involving kids and whales – recently a whale watch expedition in the Atlantic came to an end when at least one Boy Scout was lost overboard and drowned. The scouts on the vessel were not wearing life jackets, which is strange, since most of the whale watch industry is so protective of its welfare, and

guards itself from lawsuits generated by carelessness.

Perhaps Watson was unaware of this latter tragedy, or perhaps he chose not to comment on it because the vessel was on a non-consumptive mission. We are of the opinion that this man has no compassion and that his behavior simply mirrors his empty soul. The best thing he could have done was to keep his mouth shut, instead of intensifying the grief of the people of Alaska.

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## Politics and Animal Rights

Although animal welfare is already addressed in French criminal law, a change to civil law giving animals a new status is now proposed to go into effect. Animals shall now “be recognized as ‘protected property’, as living and sentient beings” according to a May 11 report in the French press. The new civil law amendment may go into effect by the end of the year.



However, the EU is now considering a constitution that would also cover animal welfare. If this document, which will be voted upon by referendum in France on May 29, is approved, “states are obliged to pay full regard to the requirements of animal welfare.”

This is all well and good, although redundant. The mainstream media has recently been discussing the possibility that France, of all nations, may not ratify the EU constitution, for reasons that only the French can explain.

All animals should be treated with respect and their confinement conditions and their deaths should be as humane as possible. If it is necessary to make this consideration a part of both national and EU law, so be it. We just think that it is probably a redundant political move that is intended to satisfy certain social elements so they will go along with the rest of proposed legislative packages as all of Europe evolves in its own unique way.

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## The Green Nuisance Strikes Again

Greenpeace has sent out an email to its supporters asking for their help “to protect our activists and to stop a South

Korean whale meat factory” in Ulsan, soon to be the site of the 57<sup>th</sup> meeting of the International Whaling Commission.

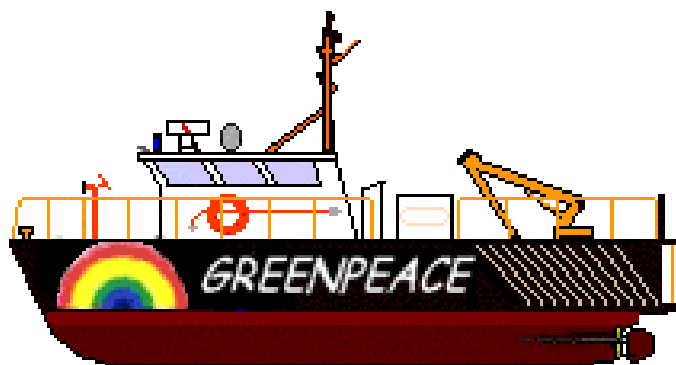
The City Council of Ulsan has given Greenpeace a deadline of May 16 to “get out of town”. The activists have erected a geodesic dome tent, complete with banners and “educational material” near the site where a whale meat production facility is planned to be built soon. Greenpeace met with city officials, and informed them that they would not leave unless plans for the factory were scrapped. This incredible arrogance will probably not be tolerated by a city that is proud to host the IWC, and to present South Korea’s own traditions of whale use.

Greenpeace notes that the minke whale butchering site shall handle animals that are caught in fishing nets. Although these catches are claimed by Korea to be accidental, Greenpeace of course claims that they are purposeful and that they are a dishonest fact of life in South Korea. Another perspective is that there are so many minke whales off

Therefore, because people in the Republic of Korea have their own tradition of whale use, they are now a target of Greenpeace and the many other anti-use NGOs that shall soon descend on Ulsan and begin their usual harangues of objection to local culture.

The Greenpeace email uses the familiar tactic of providing a link to a Korean official, so that supporters may demand that the whale factory shall not be built, and that the activists should be allowed to remain on the ground where they have pitched their tent. Of course, once these activists are arrested and jailed, there will be another email announcing this event, and giving supporters the opportunity to once again, demand that they be released.

IWMC supports all sustainable, traditional use of abundant species. The Greenpeace effort to gain media attention through exposing their activist volunteers to arrest and



Korea’s coasts that they are commonly entangled, as they are in the waters off Japan, and that it would be wasteful to refrain from using them. Korean people have their own long-standing culinary traditions in whale consumption that are unique to this peninsular nation. They are not about to give them up because foreigners demonstrate their intolerance towards them.

incarceration is typically tiresome. We support whatever firm means the people in Ulsan shall use to safely remove these persons from their unauthorized camp as they assert their rights to control their own land use and to construct whatever food production facilities are considered appropriate. Greenpeace, Go Home.

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## Noteworthy

A special conference session devoted to the topic of environmental pollutants and sturgeon biology will take place from September 20-25, 2005 in Russia. The objective is to gather sturgeon scientists working in the area of sturgeon health or toxicology from countries throughout the world representing the diversity of sturgeon species. For more information visit the website, or contact Mrs. Irina V. Chalova ([toxic2005@ibiw.yaroslavl.ru](mailto:toxic2005@ibiw.yaroslavl.ru)) or Dr. Diana Papoulias ([dpapoulias@usgs.gov](mailto:dpapoulias@usgs.gov)).

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The 6th World Congress on Seafood Safety, Quality and Trade will be held in Sydney, Australia on 14-16 September 2005. The Congress is scheduled in conjunction with Australia's Seafood Week.

To register please visit: [www.seafoodservices.com.au/conference/iafi/registration](http://www.seafoodservices.com.au/conference/iafi/registration) or contact the Congress Manager at [sqt2005@ozacomm.com.au](mailto:sqt2005@ozacomm.com.au)

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## Our deepest sympathy

IWMC learned with great sadness of the accidental loss during a bowhead hunt, of four people from the village of Gambell, Alaska. The four were out in a walrus skin boat and had struck a bowhead whale that was later recovered. The mayor of Gambell, Jason Nowpakahok and his little daughter, Yolanda, and nephew Leonard Nowpakahok, also a child, are still missing. James Uglwook, who accompanied them, was found alive but died shortly thereafter. Two other persons in the party were rescued.



We know that risk is a normal part of life on the land, and is an expected part of that life way that depends on the sea for a living. This does not make it easier when loss such as this occurs, and we extend our deepest sympathy

to the families, to the survivors, and to the community of Gambell of which they shall always be a part. The whalers of Alaska shall always be in our thoughts and prayers.



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## 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](http://www.conservingwildlife.org)

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## Subscriptions / Submissions

**Editor-in-Chief, Mrs. Janice Henke**  
**Design Director, Mr. Charles Fechko**

IWMC publishes the Sustainable eNews newsletter on a monthly basis as a service to the sustainable use community. Please share it with others who may be interested in these issues. We welcome any short stories you might want to contribute and would like to remind you that archived copies of the Sustainable eNews are available online (in .DOC and .PDF formats) at:

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***IWMC World Conservation Trust***

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