



Welcome to the 174th Party to CITES

On 23 October 2008, Armenia deposited its instrument of accession to CITES, and so will become the 174th Party to CITES on 21 January 2009



Of Whales and Men

Editorial by E. Lapointe

All those organizations and individuals who have tried valiantly to encourage the members of the International Whaling Commission to find consensus on reasonable ways to make decisions on management of large cetaceans, deserve gratitude.

Such reasonable ways would necessarily include both scientific assessment of the impact of any whaling on whale populations, on the relationships of those animals with their environments, and on the benefits to local people whose traditions include killing whales for food and craft materials, all a part of their local culture.

We note that the ICRW wording includes evidence of concern that benefits to people are as substantially important as

are science-based considerations of human impacts on whale population survival. Perhaps this is a basis for the disdain that some nations, opposed to any whaling, have recently made clear to the world.

Both recently and historically, the human rights of whaling peoples in small coastal communities have been trampled in an unconscionable manner. The apparent reason for this is a strong motivation on the part of some individuals in some nations to demonstrate their personal charisma and national power over those who seek to sustainably take whales under ICRW rules and guidelines. Australia recently made the decision to stymie the efforts of other IWC members, the Pew Foundation representatives, and prominent leaders of WWF, when the consensus wording of a resolution at an the IUCN (the International Union for Conservation of Natural Resources) meeting was nearing conclusion.

According to BBC Environmental Correspondent Richard Black, the consensus motion stated “there was not enough data to support the claim

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that culling whales could raise fisheries yields.” This original statement, agreed upon by members including Japan and Norway, echoed the beliefs of the IWC Scientific Committee that it is currently impossible to provide reliable scientific advice on the impact that cetaceans have on fisheries, although the subject “is a potentially important research topic”.

Australian leaders did not want to be a part of any statement to which Japan was a respected contributor. We can only guess at the motivation behind the new resolution that Australia dropped on the gathering. The Australian amended resolution was subsequently passed, “with a substantial majority.” It stated “that the great whales play no significant role in the current crisis affecting global fisheries”. The resolution also urged members to support marine protected areas and to discourage lethal research on whales. This obviously refers to Japan's Antarctic and north Pacific research programs.

Anti-whaling nations commented that the newly renewed impasse was “a uniquely Australian affair” although we note that they approved it, and it passed easily. Therefore, we have to conclude that there is no willingness in the IWC to accept any whaling by any Japanese coastal peoples, or to accept the scientific research findings of any Japanese lethal research programs, regardless of the relevance of environmental data to long term trends that have been demonstrated.

The impasse over whaling is a cultural disagreement, the end result of cultural objections to whaling by Australia, the US, the EU, and South American nations whose citizens have allegedly indicated their objection to whaling under any circumstances. Therefore, we see decisions of global environmental, social and economic impact being enacted in defiance of the former ICRW model, which is based on science, and on respect for all the world's cultures.

The whaling issue has come to be a reflection of a wider global concern; the world's fish resources are increasingly

being taken in an unsustainable manner by many nations' people. The allegation that recovering whale populations are contributing to fisheries declines has not been accepted by those who seek to discredit any research program (Japan's in particular) that might indicate the contributory roles of cetaceans in altering their ecosystems.

Congratulations to Richard Black, BBC correspondent, in bringing this controversy to light in a fair and balanced manner on Monday, 13 October on the BBC website. Our perspectives and we hope, those of many others, are enriched by such reporting of the behavior of some members of the International Whaling Commission and its supporters, who have genuinely and reasonably tried to encourage a “meeting of the minds” in the IWC. We all regret that some participants did not consider such an outcome beneficial, or in their national interest.

The world's societies should consider all the impacts of this recent power demonstration in the IWC, and request that their nations return their policies to the model outlined in the original International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling. That document served a worthy human ideal. It equally promoted the roles of science in decisions on resource consumption, and respect for societies that sustainably utilize the world's resources. A return to that ideal model would result in no environmental or human harm, while demonstrating a consequent benefit to people and their resources. ■

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Eco-Terrorism on the High Seas American Media Glorifies Criminal Actions

by Dr. Janice Henke, Anthropologist

On November 7, 2008, the Animal Planet television network aired the first of a series of programs entitled “Whale Wars”, in which eco-terrorist Paul Watson, head of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, is featured along with the crew of his ship, the Steve Irwin, and another vessel. The shows depict repeated attacks on the legal scientific research vessels of the Japanese Institute of Cetacean Research as those vessels plied the waters of the Antarctic in early 2008. The Sea Shepherd vessels repeatedly rammed Japanese vessels and their crew attempted to foul research vessel propellers, two SS crew members illegally boarded a Japanese ship with apparent intentions to be taken into custody, (they came with backpacks and extra clothes) and other SS crew are shown throwing glass bottles of butyric acid onto the decks of Japanese ships, as well as lobbing smoke bombs while they shouted imbecilic demands over a megaphone.

The producers at Animal Planet apparently believed that RIVR Productions would “catch the action” promised by Sea Shepherd leader Watson and that it would all make great TV. The illegal acts committed by the Sea Shepherd crew all fit the definitions of piracy contained in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), with the acts all taking place in international waters, outside the territorial jurisdiction of Japan or any other nation. That does not excuse them, nor make them less dangerous or even quasi-legal. The acid throwing incidents are not harmless nuisances, but have injured some crew members whose eyes were harmed by the substance when it splashed as bottles broke on deck.

The International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling is a treaty signed by some 90+ nations, and Article VIII calls for scientific research in order to determine if certain whale populations may be sustainably exploited. Japan has been conducting such research and complying entirely with the mandates of the Convention. Japan has operated its research vessels and its multi-year research programs entirely within the limits and requirements of the ICRW, while Watson's ridiculous, theatrical and dangerous antics at sea have themselves been illegal and inexcusably haz-



ardous. The 2007 IWC meeting in Anchorage, Alaska, passed a resolution condemning such actions. Many speakers characterized them as eco-terrorism, and those nations that support the perpetrators as “state sponsors of terrorism”. Australia, the Netherlands (whose flag is still flown by the Steve Irwin) and the United States were all deemed responsible by many nations whose delegates spoke against such acts, which were repeated and intensified in the 2008 season. Australia and the United States both allow Sea Shepherd and Greenpeace vessels port privileges, and both allow SS and Greenpeace to continue their charitable status and fund raising activities. Greenpeace ships and crews have also been involved in acts of dangerous vandalism at sea in their own efforts to hinder Japanese research while seeking hero status through their illegal acts.

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The upcoming Animal Planet TV series must be carefully scrutinized and examined by all people of integrity, and the illegal, immoral and irresponsible acts depicted must be seen and condemned as the mindless acts of aggrandizement and terrorism that they are. The many commercial sponsors of this film series should be questioned about their decision to promote these unconscionable acts. The world's general public has little understanding of the facts surrounding the whaling issue, and this film series is not going to further either social justice or true environmental awareness. In addition, the claim by Watson that he was shot by a Japanese marksman while directing his crew, is entirely false. He will be shown holding a bullet-proof vest in which a rifle shell is lodged. Japanese authorities absolutely deny that any of their crew discharged a firearm during any of these attacks on their operation.

IWMC joins all responsible parties in condemning the acts of Watson and his crew, the film production company RIVR, and the Animal Planet's parent producers, Discovery Communications. Their decision to "embed" the film crew with the SS operation was irresponsible, especially because the presence of the film company apparently served to further incite violence against innocent people, against legal scientific research, and to put the Antarctic environment at risk. It is time for all responsible world citizens to recognize that thuggery and vandalism deserve no glorification by any form of media, and that objections to sustainable use practices are clearly invalid when they are expressed in an unlawful and uncivilized manner. ■



Who says you're a fisherman, not a tour guide?

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Fur-Ever Beautiful Green, Clean and Cool

The newest efforts of the Canadian fur industry to promote the use of fur for warmth, fashion and ecological consciousness are being highlighted by media with a new focus on the reasons

why fur products are selling well and finding social approval.

Environmental awareness is key to marketing success of the “green” concepts that are part of the growing appeal of real fur garments. Real, natural fur is a truly “organic” material. It is not derived from some petro-industry's dream concoction, so there is no toxic element in either its initial production or in its ultimate disposal, because real fur is the ultimate in biodegradability. It wears well, it doesn't have a man-made chemical aura, and very importantly, modern fur garments are made from abundant, not endangered, animals. Some originate from wild furbearers that need to be managed anyway, and some originates from modern facilities' farmed animals that have no stress, hunger or concerns from birth to the humane end of their lives

The Fur Council of Canada and the Canadian Fur Trade

Development Institute have new campaigns to promote their nation's products: Fur is Green and Beautifully Canadian are labels that are now global in scope, having been introduced in Russia already, and headed for China in the next month. Western Europe is also targeted as a promising successful market through this new approach.

The fur industry never believes the nay-sayers because they know that sales of genuine, high quality fur garments and accessories have always been consistent with the concepts of high fashion, modern eco- ideology, and practicality. Today's new focus on fur as an ecologically correct choice by well informed consumers is paying huge dividends.

IWMC has always supported the idea of proactive campaigns, promoting the sustainable use of wild resources. In March 2006, the President of IWMC, Eugene Lapointe, speaking at the final banquet of the Fur Harvesters Associations in North Bay, Ontario, concluded his remarks by saying: “Go Green... wear fur.” What was, at the time, wishful thinking has become a reality, thanks to the wisdom of the Canadian furriers.

Kudos to the Canadian fur industry for its supreme efforts to continually inform the public about the advantages of real fur over synthetic substitutes. This is the winning trend in promotion of ecological awareness, sustainability, and practicality in the modern garment industry. May Canada always keep us warm in style and substance! ■

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The Seal Hunt

Europeans Are Not Concerned About Humane Killing They Want No Harvest, Regardless of the Environmental Consequences

The annual hunt for harp seals off the eastern coast of Canada has been conducted humanely and sustainably for generations. The tools used to kill seals have varied from time to time and place to place. Some wooden bats of a certain weight and length have been effective in causing instantaneous unconsciousness and brain death. As soon as the animal had been struck the required 3 blows to the head, and when the eye had been checked for lack of blink reflex, the sealer then would use a knife to sever arteries in the neck and chest area, resulting in death of the animal. The seal never experienced pain or anxiety, as its death was accomplished so quickly and efficiently.

Another tool, the metal hakapik, was equally effective, but with the added advantage of safety insurance for the sealer; its curved pick on one end could save a man's life if he fell into icy water off the floe edge. The hakapik, therefore, could not only do the job of giving the seal a quick, painless death, but could also save a man or be used to hook into and drag a pile of pelts or carcasses across the ice.

The Gulf of St. Lawrence sealers have been using the club and hakapik efficiently for years, while sealers of Labrador and Newfoundland, when taking beater stage animals have commonly used center fire rifles.

Today, however, 90% of seals are harvested with rifles, and only beaters in a few areas of the Gulf are taken with clubs or hakapiks. The overall harvest is conducted humanely as documented by veterinarians, and is extensively monitored by Canadian law enforcement officers. The humaneness of the procedure is well established, regardless of the hype surrounding it due to activist "reports" and websites.

There has been a call for deletion of use of the hakapik - not because it is an inefficient or inappropriate tool, but because it has been depicted as such by activists, in a time when EU citizens are convinced by green websites that all sealing is bad. The issue is not this detail; the issue is the

fact of sealing, not the manner of it. 90% of 350,000 seals are shot in the head, also an instantaneous death. Sealers are good marksmen, and a head shot is one acceptable and preferred method of dispatch. Regardless of claims by activists, seals are being killed in an efficient and appropriate manner, whether by club, hakapik, or rifle.

The EU legislative body has been urged by its citizens, who have been trained by activist websites, to ban the import of seal products on the pretense that all sealing is inhumane. Some Canadians have considered that banning use of the hakapik would remove one of these pretenses. The fact that the Humane Society of the United States has denied the efficiency of rifles while noting the dispute about the hakapik is indication that HSUS is not concerned with the manner of killing, only the fact of it. The activist community is very willing to focus on cruelty claims until faced with lack of visual fodder to support them - then they manufacture more falsehoods, such as claims that sealers are poor marksmen. This appears to be an on-going case of culture conflict that shall probably never be resolved, because activists will never cease telling people how to be righteously outraged by the fact of this harvest, while the alleged inappropriate manner of it only adds fuel to their ideological fires.

Over five million seals exist in an area where only 1.8 million existed in 1983. There is an extreme need for management of these animals, for their own welfare and for that of their environment. Lack of enough hunting pressure, due to lack of a consistent EU market, is responsible for this population's overabundance. Something has to be done to ensure that seals, sea birds, whales, fish and people may all co-exist in the western Atlantic. An EU ban on the import of seal products is a potential environmental and cultural disaster for Canada and Greenland.

There is no moral justification for such a move. ■

Scientist Doug Butterworth Receives High Honor from His Country

IWMC is exceptionally pleased to note that in late October 2008, the President of South Africa awarded official national recognition to Dr. Doug Butterworth, our long-time friend and colleague. The “Order of Mapungubwe: Silver” was bestowed on Dr. Butterworth for his “excellent contribution to the betterment of the environment and sustainability of fisheries”. We quote here from our notice of this honor: “This is South Africa's leading award for “excellence and exceptional achievement”, having been given to only 21 people since it was initiated in 2002 (these co-incidentally including Doug's Departmental colleagues George Ellis and Daya Reddy). It comes in four classes: platinum, gold, silver and bronze, with Nelson Mandela being the only recipient to date at the platinum level.”

IWMC has always been honored to count Doug Butterworth as a friend and advisor in all matters pertaining to the sustainable use of marine resources. His expertise in biomathematics, scientific fishery assessment, modelling and management, has become known to his professional colleagues in marine science world wide, as he has published over 180 research articles, and produced some five times this number of technical reports.

Dr. Butterworth's contributions to discussion of whale population assessment and management have been utilized in the International Whaling Commission, whose scientists have recognized him as one of the prime movers in the development of the precautionary principle. Through his and his colleagues' efforts, South Africa is now recognized as the world leader in applying this approach to its fisheries. It is now acknowledged that Dr. Butterworth's contribution to the management of South African fisheries is unparalleled. He has been the primary driving force in lifting South African fisheries management to standards that are comparable with the best in the world.

IWMC extends the most sincere and heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Doug Butterworth and to his country for this achievement, more important now than ever, as the world's scientists are concerned about the sustainability of global fisheries. Doug Butterworth shall be long remembered for his scholarly and relevant contributions to this effort. Congratulations Doug! ■

Noteworthy

2009 The IWC61 to be held from 22 to 26 June in Funchal, Madeira, Portugal

2009 World Seafood Congress to be held in Morocco

The International Association of Fish Inspectors - IAFI World Seafood Congress 2009 is to be held from 5 to 10 October in Agadir, Morocco. The theme will be 'Toward building trust in international seafood trade and market access'. This biennial event will take place for the first time on the African Continent. Email: info@iafi.net

2009 Global Technical and Trade Conference on Shrimp in China

The Global Technical and Trade Conference on Shrimp is to be held from 6 to 9 November in Guangzhou, China. This event is organized by FAO and the Chinese Ministry of Agriculture with the support of INFOFISH and the FISHINFONetwork. www.infofish.org

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