



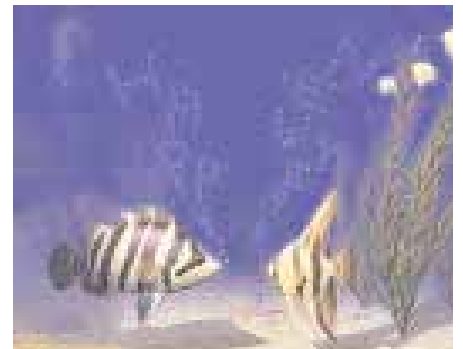
## Sounds Fishy. It is

On November 3, the prestigious journal Science published an article on the health of the world's oceans. Twelve authors were credited as major contributors to the piece, which was entitled "Impacts of Biodiversity Loss on Ocean Ecosystem Services".

There have been diverse reactions to the article since it first appeared; scientist David Suzuki commented on his website (www.davidsuzuki.org, 11/25/06) that the article was used by mainstream media in a way that was perhaps not intended by the authors or by Science magazine; the main point in the article had to do with ocean biodiversity and the importance of preserving this multitude of life in marine ecosystems through science-based fisheries management.

Instead of highlighting that point, however, major media writers and commentators who used the article focused instead on what Dr. Suzuki calls "a relatively minor point" that "was used to highlight the urgency of the need to change the way we manage our oceans." Commentators used the concept of an impending ocean disaster – the collapse of all commercial fisheries in the next few decades, with less than appropriate attention to the original authors' point that this could be expected to happen unless measures were taken immediately to harvest sustainably, with accountability, and with science based monitoring of fish stocks.

Dr. Suzuki recognizes that news media want drama in their work, and they believe that catastrophic headlines cause people to buy newspapers, magazines, and to stay tuned to the channel on which the drama



is being reported. Because mainstream media picked out and highlighted, out of context, the point in the article about potential collapse of all ocean fisheries, Suzuki appears to have been correct in his analysis of the "News Game". His website illustrates this point, as he quotes one headline that reads "All seafood could disappear by 2050, new report" while another headline blares "Kiss Your Fish and Chips Goodbye".

Suzuki notes that "most newspapers and television stations stuck to the 'total collapse' angle, often ignoring the biodiversity story altogether. More thoughtful journals, however, did focus on the actual thrust of the study -- fisheries management and biodiversity. In its news pages, Science used the headline 'Global loss of biodiversity harming ocean bounty', for example, while The Economist ran with 'New research points to a better way of protecting fish stocks'."

The Monterey County Herald, a California newspaper, is to be congratulated for the perspective brought out by its two writers who analyzed the Science piece: Kevin Howe and Sarah C.P. Williams wrote "Oceans Early Demise Disputed" (November 28).

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## What if the Animals don't really love us?

Editorial by Eugene Lapointe



Our friend in conservation, retired US Fish & Wildlife Service official Jim Beers, has been watching American television news lately, and reminds us of some elemental truths. Animals, for one thing, are not usually very nice – to each other or to people, so watch out! He deplores the way the American media report on those instances in which, for instance, alligators eat people, killer whales hurt their human co-stars in aquarium shows, and sea lions are becoming a physical menace to humans on the left coast.

The media, says Beers, is always making excuses for the animals, as if they have a right of some kind to “rebel” against human presence. Perhaps the alligators feel pressured by too many people in their environment. Perhaps the killer whale was bored with the show routine. Perhaps the sea lions have been driven crazy by bad algae on their food, or perhaps, they are just hungry and grumpy, and that is why they have been attacking swimmers and people on the beach. When cougars and wolves are discovered to have been killing and eating people, and when African elephants trample humans to death, and when shark attacks increase, media spokespersons find “reasons” to explain this unusual behavior.

Beers wants us all to get a grip. He reminds us that predatory creatures eat other creatures. Sometimes we just happen to be in the way. When elephants rampage through African villages, killing people, it is because there are too many elephants for the area, and their numbers should be reduced. This is not cold hearted, it is cold hard fact.

Environments change over time. On the west coast of North America, there are too many sea lions because Americans cling to the outdated and inappropriate Marine Mammal Protection Act, which is badly in need of revision. When bears become too numerous in areas where humans live, this becomes obvious as human/bear conflicts increase in both severity and in number. When alligators eat people, it is time for some serious alligator control. Increasing shark attacks coincide with government-enforced shark fishing restrictions.

Officials should manage dangerous wildlife appropriately so that human/animal conflicts are minimized. Otherwise, wildlife will quickly become a menace in the eyes of the public. The public's opinion of native animals should be one of respect and admiration, not one of loathing – or for that matter, of unthinking love.

Wildlife is a precious resource and it is our responsibility to act as stewards of the environment that we share. This will result in improved safety for both humans and animals. ■



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They quote scientists who identify a major flaw in the disaster scenario, namely that it depends on records of fish catch; these scientists point out that improved management techniques on the part of responsible nations include lowering the amount of catch for species in certain areas. Such lowered catch is a sign of increased responsibility, not a sign that the stocks are headed to extinction.

Howe and Williams join Suzuki in deploring “Enviro-sen-

sationalism”. A number of marine scientists argue that while there may be some benefit to management programs if the general public feels alarmed by dire predictions, and would therefore support more stringent management measures, there is at present no need for panic about the world supply of seafood. As long as management is based in science, and as long as harvest measures are systematically conservative, the oceans’ biodiversity will continue to survive and flourish. ■

## What Risks are really being minimized?

The Boston Globe (December 2, 2006) has reported on huge compensation payments that will be made to various groups prior to the installation of liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals that are planned for two areas 11 miles off the coast of Massachusetts. The terminals will be collection stations for the LNG that will be imported via ship over a 25-year period.

The LNG development companies have agreed to pay millions of dollars in advance to the state and to fishermen, to environmental groups, and to entities that will hold the payments in lieu of any environmental damage occurring to the marine ecosystem. A sea bottom pipeline will deliver the gas to the state.

Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney is expected to give final approval for the terminals and the environmental

“protection fund” or “compensation fund” arrangements within a month or so.

Fishermen and lobstermen are reportedly not enchanted with the project. They feel that their interests have not been given due consideration. Their concern is not money, but the future of the coastal environment and the total ecosystem in which they live and work. To them, the environment is worth more than money, and they don’t want to see the construction of a project that could damage their world.

It appears that the real risks being minimized in this case are those of future litigation, future land value damage, and the physical risk to humans living near the coast. ■

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## Australia's Environment Minister goes over the Dark Side

**K**eiichi Nakajima, President of the Japan Whaling Association, has reminded Australia's Environment Minister, Senator Ian Campbell, that a resolution co-sponsored by Australia at the IWC meeting in St. Kitts & Nevis last June demanded that contracting IWC governments "not condone any actions that are a risk to human life and property in relation to research whaling and urges persons and entities to refrain from such acts".

The resolution, "Safety of Vessels Engaged in Whaling and Whale Research Related Activities", encourages IWC member countries to "ensure that the substance and spirit of this Resolution are observed both domestically and internationally". The Resolution was meant to discourage Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd from physically disrupting whale research programs.

Mr. Nakajima complains that the Minister has "thrown this resolution out the window" by pledging material support to Sea Shepherd, allowing it to use an Australian Antarctic base in an emergency as it tries to intervene in the current Japanese research effort in the Southern Ocean. Campbell admitted that he telephoned Sea Shepherd's radical leader, Paul Watson, and wished him well.

Sea Shepherd has a long record of criminal activity at sea, including endangering the lives of fishermen, whalers, and national police. Watson has even bragged about using mines to damage the vessels of those whose activities he opposes. Last year, Campbell described Watson as "deranged".

One Sea Shepherd crewmember subsequently revealed to a Canadian newspaper that the group is planning to foul the propeller of the Japanese mother ship at sea. This would breach the SOLAS (Safety of Life At Sea) Convention of the International Maritime Organization and would put the vessel and its crew's lives at serious risk.

IWMC President Eugene Lapointe said: "Will Australia officially respond to this situation by restoring proper respect for the IWC and international law? Will it reverse Minister Campbell's support for Sea Shepherd? Why would a responsible democracy actively fighting terrorism take steps to encourage eco-terrorism? What is Australia's word worth when it so rapidly goes against its own resolution to uphold international law? Speak up, Australia." ■



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## Canada Solves One Problem, Creates Another

In western Canada, newly signed treaties with native bands have straightened out various details about community rights and obligations. Native traditions and the place of native communities within the greater whole that is Canada have been agreed, so that these communities, like others in Canada, are now responsible for their own local governance. At the same time, Native people have agreed to abide by Canadian federal and provincial laws regarding their take of timber, fish and game. Native peoples and non-native Canadians are thus treated equally under the laws of the land.

But there is one serious problem that remains to be settled, with implications for the future of fisheries management and a lasting, respectful peace among all Canadians. A "side agreement" to the Lheidli T'enneh treaty gives the tribe 0.7% of British Columbia's commercial sockeye salmon fishery. In addition, the newly forged Tsawwassen treaty repeats this race-based quota gift with a range from 0.7 to 3.0 per cent of the annual catch of a variety of salmon species.

These precedents may not sound like much, until one realizes that there are some ninety other native bands in B.C. that also seek similar treaty arrangements with federal Canada. Lorne Gunter points out that "if the ninety or so B.C. bands with fishing claims in their treaty negotiations

were all given similar guaranteed catches, there would be virtually no salmon left for non-native fishermen when this process is complete." He notes that Conservative Party Prime Minister Stephen Harper ran on a campaign promise to "never allow" a race-based fishery, that is, one based on the fact that a fisherman is either native or non-native.

The present treaties have broken that promise and non-native Canadians are grievously disappointed. It may be that the matter was concluded in a way that revealed the power of others. Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice insists the fishery guarantees in these new treaties are not "racially segregated." He maintains they are "quota-segregated, if you will, or harvest allotment-segregated." Gunter points out that "if the quotas or harvests are allotted on the basis of one's skin colour -- and they are under these treaties -- then they are race-based."

IWMC President Eugene Lapointe said: "Race-based fishery is not in the best interests of the resource or of Canadians, and this situation should be amended so that the distribution of natural resources in BC waters reflects the highest ideals of social justice and environmental responsibility. The Canadian government should treat all its citizens with fairness and respect, regardless of the color of their skins." ■

## Sea lions aren't all that cuddly

A series of sea lion attacks on people has led experts to warn the animals are not as cute and cuddly as they appear. In the most frightening of the episodes, a sea lion bit 14 swimmers and chased 10 more out of the water at San Francisco's Aquatic Park, a sheltered lagoon near San Francisco Bay, during the month of November. Sea lions, which can reach 1,000 pounds, typically bite only if they feel threatened. Researchers have described the most recent attacks, in which some swimmers were chased through open water, as abnormal behavior. (St. Petersburg Times, Nov. 29, 2006) ■



## 2007 Meetings

<b>27 Feb. – 1 March</b>	NAMMCO meeting, Tromso, Norway
<b>5 – 9 March</b>	FAO/COFI meeting, Rome, Italy
<b>26 – 30 March</b>	FAO ad hoc panel on CITES proposals, Rome, Italy
<b>25 May – 1 June</b>	IWC 59, Anchorage, Alaska
<b>2 – 15 June</b>	CITES 55th Standing Committee and CoP 14, The Hague, Netherlands
<b>25-28 Sept.</b>	World Seafood Congress 07, Dublin, Ireland