



A Conservation Anniversary and a Message for the Future

Editorial by Eugene Lapointe



April 21, 2009 marked the fifteenth anniversary of the formation of the International Wildlife Management Consortium, or IWMC. In those fifteen years, IWMC World Conservation Trust has been increasingly recognized around the world as a hard working, politically astute organization whose leaders and supporters tirelessly advocate for the rights of human beings to sustainably use their wild natural resources.

The organization is directed by founder and President Eugene Lapointe, former Secretary General of the United Nations Convention on International Trade in wild species of fauna and flora, or CITES. The following is Eugene Lapointe's message regarding the IWMC mission and accomplishments:

"I am very pleased to report to the world on the accomplishments and goals of IWMC on this, the 15th anniversary of our organization. Our mission has been to promote the sustainable use of wild resources, both terrestrial and aquatic, as a conservation mechanism, to re-establish the fundamental link between all components of nature, including man, to develop better understanding, respect and tolerance towards cultures and values of all nations and social groups in their relationship with nature, and to protect the Sovereign Rights of independent States in their conservation efforts.

The key to success in conservation has always been the concept and practice of sustainable use of resources, made possible by the support of involved scientists and by the support of nations whose

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Promoting Sustainable Use

actions enable enforcement of scientific recommendations for regulation of resource use and trade. Conservation has been both a biological and a political force for good in the modern world. Those nations whose leaders have supported the IWMC policies of sustainable use are to be commended for their consistent courage in doing so in the face of a myriad of unpleasant political and social adversaries.

Together, we have prevailed in a number of conservation arenas globally - the most notable being at CITES, where IWMC recommendations on various proposals have received the highest level of acceptance, during the last five meetings of the Conference of the Parties. This record is a significant achievement for those who support science, national sovereignty and human rights as vitally important elements on the world conservation stage, where all manner of decisions on resource use are debated.

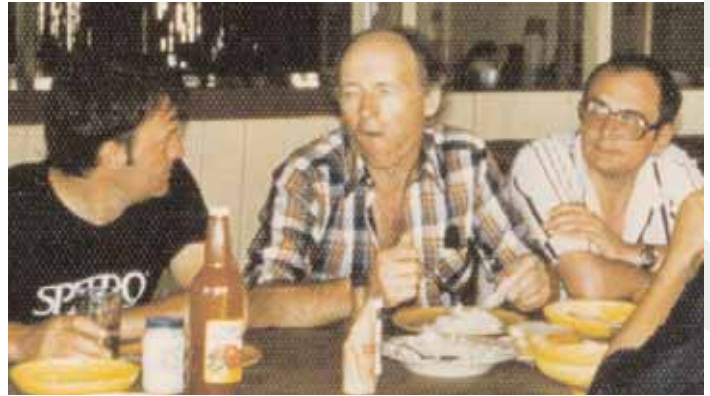
For 18 months prior to the 1997 CoP 10 in Harare, IWMC visited and worked with 66 CITES member states promoting the entrenchment of secret ballot in CITES procedure, so that the sovereign rights of Parties be protected and assured as votes were taken on sensitive issues. Use of the secret ballot in this context has been recognized as one of IWMC's most significant leadership accomplishments, thanks to the courage and global vision of the states involved.

IWMC provides advice and support to governments, diplomats, politicians, organizations and individuals around the world, including fisheries' groups, sealers, whalers, the reptile skins industry, wild animal farms, falconries, the caviar industry, zoos, aquaria, ivory carvers' groups, and many other artisans involved in sustainable use of wild resources.

Over the years, we have organized and convened the following international symposia or workshops:

- 1997 Havana, International Symposium on Hawksbill Turtle
- 1997 Bali, First IWMC Symposium on Sustainable Use of Wild Resources
- 1998 Lausanne, Workshop on Sturgeon Conservation in the Caspian Sea
- 1999 Chengdu, Second IWMC Symposium on Sustainable Use of Wild Resources
- 2000 Tokyo, Symposium on Sustainable Use of Marine Resources
- 2002 Johannesburg, Workshop on Management of African Elephant
- 2007 Dakar, Workshop on CITES for French Speaking Countries of Africa
- 2007 Pretoria, Workshop on CITES CoP14 decision on African Elephants

"Thirty years of friendship..."



"Tortuguero, Costa Rica, 31 March 1979 After CITES CoP 2, Eugène Lapointe, Chair of the Finances Committee, and Jaques Berney and Obdulio Menghi of the CITES Secretariat". As of 1982, they will spend nine years together at the helm of CITES Secretariat



Nyon, Switzerland, 13 March 2009 Eugene Lapointe, Jaques Berney, of IWMC and Obdulio Menghi of the Fundacion Biodiversidad. Still united for the scientifically-based approach to conservation

During IWMC 15 years of existence, senior members of IWMC were invited lecturers for 58 occasions, in 23 countries: Australia, Austria, Canada, China, Cuba, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New-Zealand, Norway, Russian Federation, Singapore, Switzerland, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad-Tobago, United States, Venezuela and Vietnam.

IWMC also prepares press releases on issues important to conservation, and publishes and distributes "Sustainable eNews", a regular electronic publication that is read by the global conservation community. While most of our work is done in three languages, English, French and Spanish, IWMC has also published documentation in Arabic, Chinese, Italian, Japanese and Russian.

We have followed the unfortunate and obstructive patterns of political interventions at the International Whaling Commission, during every meeting since Puerto Vallarta (1994), and still believe that coastal communities shall eventually find a way to use their cetacean resources in a manner appropriate to both sustainability and cultural traditions. IWMC supports all those who adhere to these principles, in the belief that our societies have an inherent right to use our natural resources in ways that ensure their continuation far into the future.

None of these accomplishments could have become reality without the constant devotion, the incomparable knowledge and selflessness of IWMC's Board members, collaborators and associates. They have served the international community in an admirable way, often in very difficult contexts not to say hostile environment. On this, the fifteenth anniversary of IWMC World Conservation Trust, we stand proud of our track record and eager to continue forward with all those around the world who support science-based and culturally respectful use of natural resources."



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Tuna Conservation Depends on Global Cooperation through Science

Marine scientists around the globe have issued warnings that some tuna species have been and are continuing to be, over-fished to the point that sustainability of the stocks is in grave doubt. Atlantic bluefin tuna migrate into the Mediterranean each year to spawn, where the breeding collections of these giants are targeted each May and June by EU and other fishers. Business plans in the industry depend on landing large quotas of this giant and highly prized fish. Competition for the resource drives fishery plans and actions.

One non-governmental organization, the World Wildlife Fund, has gone so far as to report that EU member states signed an agreement on bluefin quotas that are 47 percent higher than levels recommended by scientists. Why would this happen, when scientific recommendations, and widespread adherence to them, are a vital key to sustainability of a prized resource? The WWF issued a statement that the bluefin population “will be wiped out by 2012” due to over-fishing, based on the November 2008 EU quota agreement.

One answer may be that fishery workers' unions in each nation are fighting for high catches in the short term in order to keep the membership contented. The unions are a significant part of each coastal EU constituency, and the grim predictions of tuna collapse in the near future are probably not heeded when the conventional wisdom is that “if we don't get them, the others will”. This attitude is the same as that which drove many species of the great whales to a dangerously diminished state, in the years prior to 1946.

The 1946 International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling is a laudable and serious

model for all modern resource users to follow. The convention mandates that all management decisions shall be based in science. In addition to this admonition, it is also vitally important that nations cooperate in enforcement efforts to ensure that cheating does not occur at sea or in ports where catches are transferred to market, and that records of market acquisitions are accurate, verifiable, and in line with science-based quotas. Market directors must be held responsible for accuracy of records on tuna acquisition, because without accountability at the sale counter, this resource shall disappear.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization has expressed concern in this situation, in the context of the global economic crisis. Investment patterns in the European tuna fishing industry will be the topic of the FAO Fishery Industry Officer, Ms. Helga Josupeit, at the April 27, 2009 European Tuna Conference. Her topic, “Is There Still Volume Growth in the European Tuna Market? With Special Reference to the Present Crisis” will be presented to participants, and it is hoped that EU decision makers shall make some difficult, but vitally necessary, decisions regarding the upcoming season quotas of Atlantic bluefin tuna.

The problem of over-fishing is not unique to the Mediterranean. Indian Ocean stocks of yellowfin tuna are similarly in need of immediate conservation action in order that they shall not be even more dangerously diminished. In this case, the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation has warned that science-based quotas, backed up with “measurable and enforceable conservation measures” must be enacted immediately

because the stock of yellowfin has been severely over-fished. The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission recognizes that the resource is in danger now, because fishing fleets have been uncontrolled and science has been ignored.

The International Seafood Sustainability Foundation calls on all nations to exercise responsibility through appropriate actions in regional fishery management organizations, to heed science-based quotas and enforcement of them by whatever means are necessary.

Susan Jackson, president of ISSF, calls for nations to support funding so that RFMOs can adequately collect necessary data on fish stocks and the effects on them of specific harvest levels,

and act as advisory bodies in the matter of quotas in specific areas.

This fish story is being repeated globally; scientists evaluate tuna stocks and the impacts on them of specific levels of fishing effort, and seriously advise that the precautionary principle of conservative harvest be accepted and executed in each case. It is now the responsibility of nations to educate and regulate their fishers, their markets, and their citizen consumers regarding the necessity of national and regional control of fishing efforts, problems that are based in the realities of cultural, economic, and biological processes. Only a truly sincere cooperative effort shall result in sustainable fisheries for the benefit of mankind and the oceans upon which we all depend.



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Piracy Update

The actions of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society in the Antarctic Ocean during the past three years are synonymous with piracy, as defined by Article 101 of UNCLOS, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Those nations which have supported the Sea Shepherds by allowing them charity status in their fund raising activities, or port privileges and refueling access, and finally, the display of a national flag on the vessels, are in clear violation of UNCLOS. This does matter, regardless of whether or not these nations have signed on to the Law of the Sea Convention.

At the 2007 IWC meeting in Anchorage, Alaska, member states discussed the Sea Shepherd actions as “state sponsored terrorism”, to the acute embarrassment of the United States, which hosted the meeting. Since that time, the American television network Animal Planet has featured Sea Shepherd as a hero organization through airing a professionally produced series of filmed episodes of Watson's ship attacking Japanese research vessels in Antarctic waters. Whale Wars was produced on board the SSCS vessels, and shown during the fall of 2008, ending in December. At the same time, the film crew was again on-board and it has been suggested that the filming of this latest production may have encouraged even more violent, dangerous and destructive acts in the 2008-09 research season, during which damage to vessels and injury to crew were documented. It is also alleged that Watson's vessels not only did not aid in the search for a man lost at sea, but actually hampered search operations.

When the Sea Shepherd finally left the area and docked at Hobart, Australia, the Australian

Federal Police served Paul Watson with a warrant demanding that all current film be surrendered, along with all ship's logs and records pertaining to the season's illegal attacks and obstructive activities.

It appears that charges against the Sea Shepherds may be imminent in the matter of piracy in the Southern Ocean, perhaps to be heard in an international court of law. Those nations which have given support to the organization are likely to be named as having contributed to acts of piracy against Japan in this matter. The United States may be named. The Netherlands has allowed Watson to fly its national flag on his vessel, the Steve Irwin, which was used in this season's criminal acts. In addition, a Netherlands organization has awarded the SSCS a grant of 500,000 euros in support of its efforts to impede scientific research whaling in Antarctica. Australia might also be implicated, but because the nation cooperated by serving the warrant, it is unclear as what could be the outcome for this country.

The matter of state responsibility for support of terrorism piracy was discussed by IWC Parties during the recent intersessional meeting in Rome on the future of the IWC. The developments will be interesting to follow and IWMC will document and publish any future legal procedures and negotiations that shall ensue.

Legal Trade begins in African Elephant Ivory

In 2008, the CITES Standing Committee approved the legal sale of certain categories of stored African elephant ivory to China and Japan. This important decision now enables the nations of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe to realize some income from the sale of confiscated, culled and otherwise legally obtained ivory to designated markets where it is desired for cultural and economic reasons.

Prior to this agreement by the Standing Committee, nations in southern Africa have found it very difficult to adequately fund law enforcement efforts to enforce their laws against poaching of these animals, and the uncontrolled sale of their ivory on the global black market. Adequate law enforcement is expensive to carry out, uses sophisticated modern technology in surveillance and apprehension tactics, and is absolutely necessary to the conservation of these animals and

their habitats. The sale of this resource by these governments shall now further enable the necessary enforcement of conservation initiatives in these countries.

The first 100 tons of ivory have arrived in the designated ports; China received its shipment (approximately 60 tons) in March and Japan received its shipment (approximately 40 tons) in April of 2009. The four African countries where the ivory originated, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, will share an amount of approximately US\$16,000,000.00 which will be devoted to enhance community development and to further conservation of African elephants and the habitats they share with people.

Congratulations to the six countries involved

Seal Time 2009

Despite the decent weather and ice conditions, there is very little sealing activity off the coasts of Newfoundland this year. The price of diesel fuel for the long liners is more expensive than at any time in decades, while the price of seal pelts is lower than at any time in recent memory. Despite a surging demand for seal blubber that can be processed into Omega 3 oil capsules, there will not be a harvest adequate to control the burgeoning herd of harp seals off eastern Canada. Scientists estimate that the herd, which stood at 1.8 million animals in 1983, has now grown to over 5.5 million.

A negligible harvest this year, in a time of global economic crisis, bodes ill for the welfare of seals,



krill, fish, whales, seabirds and not least, for people, who have traditionally depended on the sale of seal products and the supplies of fresh meat,





each spring. Seals are observed to be eating everything they can find, from capelin and krill to crab, lobster and herring and in some areas, have entirely decimated local stocks of cod, which had been recovering under Canada's management regime.

And still, the websites of anti-seal hunt campaigners in Europe are loaded with photographs and lurid descriptions of men hunting “babies” on the ice, and imploring the web visitors to contact their EU legislators, to demand a total ban on the importation of all seal products. The citizens of Europe who fall for this message have no other information, and so they do as they are asked, and their parliamentarians get the picture.

The biological crisis in the north Atlantic shall deepen with the growing imbalance between predator and prey species if this falsely informed public policy goes forward. Seals are voracious eaters, and they shall increasingly suffer the effects of a culturally manipulated loss of a market for their valuable products. This is extreme irony, as the falsely informed citizens who demand an end to seal imports believe they are creating an environment in which no seals shall suffer.

It is possible that current efforts to correct the misinformation that has been circulated may save the day, as government-to-government discussion and documentation of humane and necessary seal hunting may revitalize this much needed industry. Seals are humanely killed and their numbers are accurately recorded at record highs, growing dangerously close to eating themselves out of their habitat.

Coastal communities depend on fish and seals for their livelihoods, and there is no ecological, humane or social justification for any call to end a sustainable hunt for seals. Canada, Greenland, Norway, Russia, Finland and Sweden all note the growth of north Atlantic seals to a high of eight million animals, overall. Some EU nations' fishermen have their governments' permission to shoot seals whenever they come close to nets or fish farms, and those animals are wasted. This is no way to co-exist with the other members of an ecosystem, and it is time for all governments to take a responsible stand in disputing the false messages about seal harvest, for the good of their own people, and for the benefit of the total environment, of which we humans are an integral active part.