

Eco

International Whaling Commission Annual Meeting

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Thank You, Australia!

The government of Australia has been moving forward in several important ways to stop the misuse of science in the Southern Oceans while promoting non-lethal forms of research.

The government has put up 14 million Australian dollars to conduct research on whales and their ecosystem in the Southern Ocean, providing useful

data untainted by commercial bias so clearly evident in Japan's so-called "scientific" whaling operations. Plus the whales will still be alive after they are studied.

Australia is also proposing a number of changes to the Scientific Committee structure and process to help improve management and scientific information about key whale stocks and environmental problems.

We thank Australia for their enlightened efforts to protect and study whales, and we urge other governments to follow their lead this week at the IWC meeting.

And if the rumors are true that the United States delegation, full of Bush appointees and back-room dealmakers, are indeed criticizing the Australian delegation for their initiatives, shame on the US!

A Little Bit More History: Civil Society

I was privileged to be elected during the IWC Special Meeting in Rome, earlier this year, as one of three Observers for NGOs to address the Plenary for a few minutes, courtesy of the Chairman. It was an interesting and, I think, successful experiment in producing a statement which practically all the NGOs concerned with

"environment". Consider some history. In the very first years of the IWC a

IWC abolished the baleen whale Sanctuary in the Southeastern sector of the Antarctic.

In the late 1960s, in the wake of the failure of IWC members to honor the commitment they made in 1960 to bring Antarctic baleen whale catches down at least to sustainable levels by 1964, a steady and growing stream of NGOs

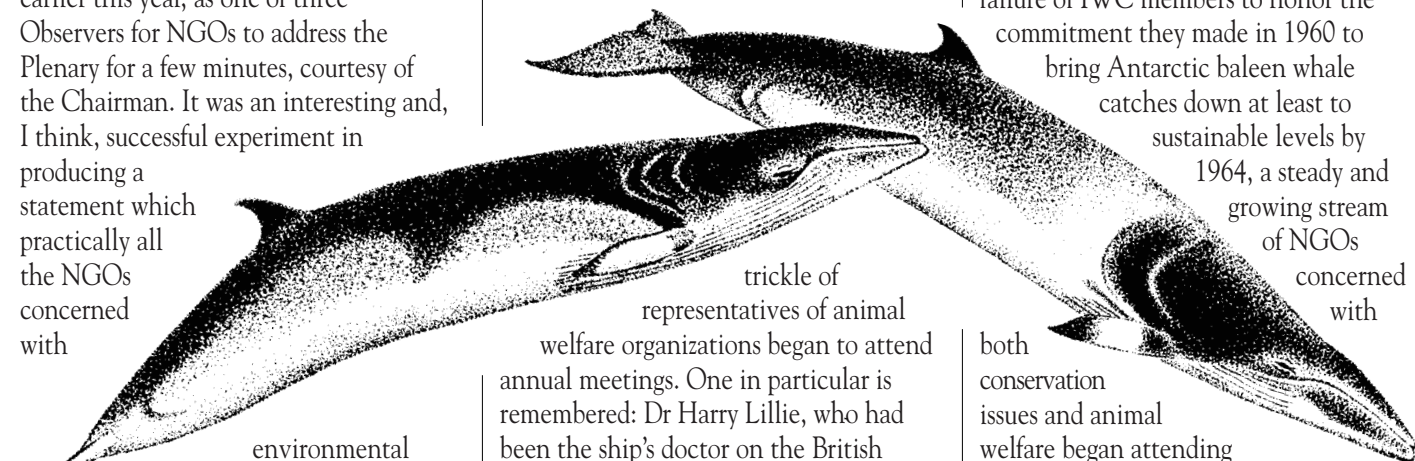
environmental issues, conservation of marine life and those mainly interested in animal welfare could support. Many of them contributed to its drafting. The statement was not even treated as a part of the official record of the meeting, though copies are said to be available from the Secretariat.

But the statement was conceived and delivered in what I thought was a thoroughly unsatisfactory

trickle of representatives of animal welfare organizations began to attend annual meetings. One in particular is remembered: Dr Harry Lillie, who had been the ship's doctor on the British expedition *Southern Harvester* and was horrified by what he described as the cruelty of hunting and killing blue and fin whales with cannon and explosive grenade, many of them shot in the abdomen and taking an hour or more to die. He spoke at the meetings about this and wrote it up in an entrancing but saddening book: *The Path Through Penguin City*, published by Ernest Benn Ltd, London, in 1955—the year the

concerned with both conservation issues and animal welfare began attending IWC meetings. Each of them was allowed to express its views, hopes and demands by providing a written statement that became part of the IWC official record and, if it wished, to speak, usually in the opening plenary session. These statements, too, became part of the record of the IWC.

As concern by representatives of civil society increased through the 1970s
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Iceland: Big Whales versus Big Problems

While Icelandic whalers haul in huge endangered fin whales from their new commercial hunt in the north Atlantic, economic and political forces are in motion that may well end the new commercial venture.

Iceland's economy is in tatters, and the only hope to restore the destroyed banking system may be for Iceland to join the European Union. However, the EU is unlikely to welcome Iceland to their fold unless Iceland agrees to stop hunting the endangered whales.

Last Thursday evening, one of Iceland's catcher boats hauled in two fin whales estimated to weigh 35 tonnes

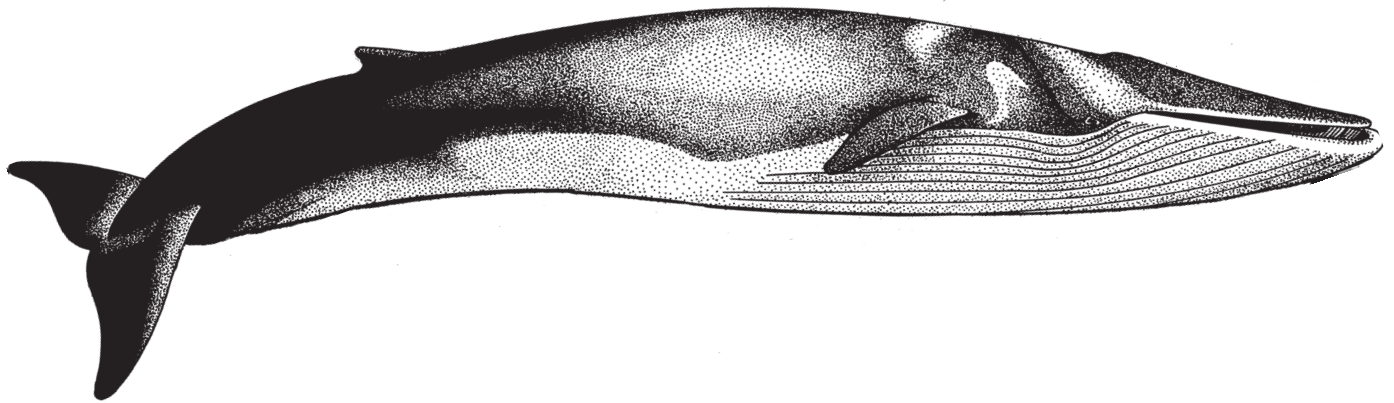
each. Fin whales were severely depleted by commercial whaling in its heyday, but Iceland has awarded itself the incredible quota of 150 fin whales, along with 100 minke whales for 2009. The slaughter is going on as the IWC is meeting, in violation of the moratorium on commercial whaling. Last year's quota was only 40 minke whales and nine fin whales, so the 2009 quota represents a huge jump in bloodshed.

Britain, France, Germany, and the United States have protested the increased quotas for Iceland's defiant whaling industry.

Kristjan Loftsson, the head of

Iceland's whaling company, told AFP reporters that Iceland would likely have to give up whaling if it joined the EU. Loftsson himself is strongly opposed to having Iceland join the EU, seeing it as a threat to the Icelandic fishing industry.

In the meantime, with Iceland's tourist industry hurting from the general economic climate, many Icelanders are wondering why the government is pursuing increased quotas for a few whales which is sure to raise the ire of environmentalists and lead to tourism boycotts? A number of companies in Europe that import resources from Iceland have contacted the government protesting the return to whaling.



Civil Society, concluded from page one and early 1980s this process took up excessive time, and there clearly had to be some change. A reasonable way might have been for a few to speak on

ECO

ECO is published by Earth Island Institute's International Marine Mammal Project at the annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission in Madeira, Portugal, on behalf of environmental and animal welfare organizations around the globe.

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behalf of the rest but, instead, the Commission simply banned such statements outright. Then even the written circulated statements became truncated and regulated until we reach the present situation of rules about what may be written (no criticism of named countries, for example), and no illustrations or glossiness.

I know of no other intergovernmental organization where the rules are so restrictive and authoritarian. Contrast this with other bodies. CITES is often cited as liberal in this respect, but my experience has been as an observer to FAO's Committee on Fisheries, an authoritative body with more Member states than the IWC. As an Observer for an accredited NGO I can provide documents for circulation and I can ask - and get—the Chair's

permission to speak on any agenda item. The Chairman of course exercises his discretion, but in a reasonable way, provided the requests are reasonable and the timing of such interventions are facilitated by the Secretary of the Committee. Furthermore, Observers at COFI are provided with facilities such as microphones and interpretation devices, and sit at proper seats with table space. Their words are taken into account in the official reports of the session - as well as occasional responses to them from government delegates. And they are not required to contribute part of the expenses of keeping the United Nations running!

I suggest it is time for the IWC to move towards the way the UN conducts its business.

—Dr. Sydney Holt

Greenland's Greedy Whaling Request

Greenland is asking the IWC once again for permission to allow local kills of humpback whales for supposedly "aboriginal subsistence" uses, but, to coin a phrase, there's something rotten in Denmark.

The subsistence whalers will be selling humpback meat in commercial markets throughout Greenland.

In a letter to the Commission signed by a number of NGO groups, the World Society for the Protection of Animals and the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society point out:

- Greenland bases its "needs" statement for nutrition on the entire population of Greenland, not on the local subsistence tribes' needs.
- Greenland's assumption presumes that humpback whale meat is needed to provide the entire population with meat, when in fact locals already kill large numbers of small cetaceans, seals, and reindeer, not to mention fish.
- A WSPA investigation discovered last year that fully 25 percent of the

whales taken for "subsistence" instead went to a commercial company that sold the meat in 100 supermarkets throughout Greenland, for a hefty profit.

Clearly, Greenland has to go back and redo the entire proposal for humpback whales, to ensure that the "aboriginal subsistence" provisions of the IWC are complied with, not flaunted.

In the meantime, the IWC should not approve this proposed hunt. Greenland should not be marketing humpback whale meat throughout Greenland via supermarkets nor inflating the needs for subsistence users.

The Cove is Coming

The new award-winning documentary, "The Cove", will be shown here at the IWC meeting in the hotel, Suite 403 at 8 PM on Tuesday evening, 10 PM on Wednesday evening (after the NGO reception), and all day Thursday. ECO will report further information on screenings of "The Cove" or ask you favorite NGO representative.

As ECO and others have documented time and time again, the Japan Fisheries Agency handles the truth very loosely.

Now, that reality is about to be presented to the world on the big screen.

"The Cove" is a new movie presenting an intense and inspiring experience. It received standing ovations in various film festival circuit theaters. It received the Audience Award at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, and has so far garnered further Audience Awards at the Hot Docs Film Festival in Toronto, the Newport Film Festival, the Nantucket Film Festival, the Sydney International Film Festival, and the Seattle International Film Festival, plus Best of Festival at the Blue Ocean Film Festival.

Director Louie Psihoyos and the Oceanic Preservation Society made the film, which focuses on the work of Save

Japan Dolphins Coalition and its Director, Richard O'Barry, to stop the annual slaughter of dolphins off the Japanese coast. This annual kill of 20-23,000 dolphins annually is conducted in the most horrific manner imaginable – the hunt is fully documented, along with the continued contempt the Japan Fisheries Agency has for the IWC and the truth.

"The Cove" will open in theaters in the US this summer; it will be shown worldwide this fall.

For further information, go to <http://www.SaveJapanDolphins.org> website, and "The Cove" movie action website <http://www.TakePart.com/thecove>

Updated IWC Lexicon

Exclusively for our ECO readers, we have provided the following lexicon so you can understand some of the up-to-the-minute rhetoric coming out of the US delegation.

The Way Forward—A future IWC that protects and kills whales simultaneously.

The Future of the IWC—A way forward for the IWC that protects and kills whales simultaneously.

Win-Win—Protecting and killing whales simultaneously.

Accommodation—Allowing Japan to kill whales in their coastal area commercially, thus giving away the 20-year-old moratorium on commercial whaling, while allowing Japan to kill hundreds more whales under scientific permits in the Southern Ocean, all while claiming to oppose commercial whaling and "scientific" whaling. (See also Doublespeak.)

Packages—Secret deals that apparently nobody agrees with or wants to claim ownership of, but are still there chock full of "accommodations." Used as a noun, a verb, and a substitute for

thought.

Civil Society Involvement—NGOs can observe the meetings of the Small Working Group from now on, but cannot observe meetings of the Small Support Working Group, and of course, can observe nothing at all during "executive sessions" of IWC.

Whales—Large mammals that can be divided up into "the quick" and "the dead." Also known as "lunch," "natural resource," "sources of scientific data," "fisheries eaters," and as excuses for expensive junkets to beautiful Atlantic island resorts.

Japan's Whaling—There's Another Catch

Important news. The scientific folks analyzing the Soviet true-and-fake catch data for pelagic whaling in the Antarctic in the 1970s (see ECO No. 1) have revealed falsifications in the years when the International Observer Scheme (IOS) was in operation.

That is when there were Japanese IWC-accredited observers on the Soviet vessels. It has also long been presumed that the Japanese meat buyers were aware of the Soviet trickery, because meat was regularly being transhipped at sea from the Soviet factories to Tokyo by

refrigerated transport vessels, and they surely knew what they were buying, no?

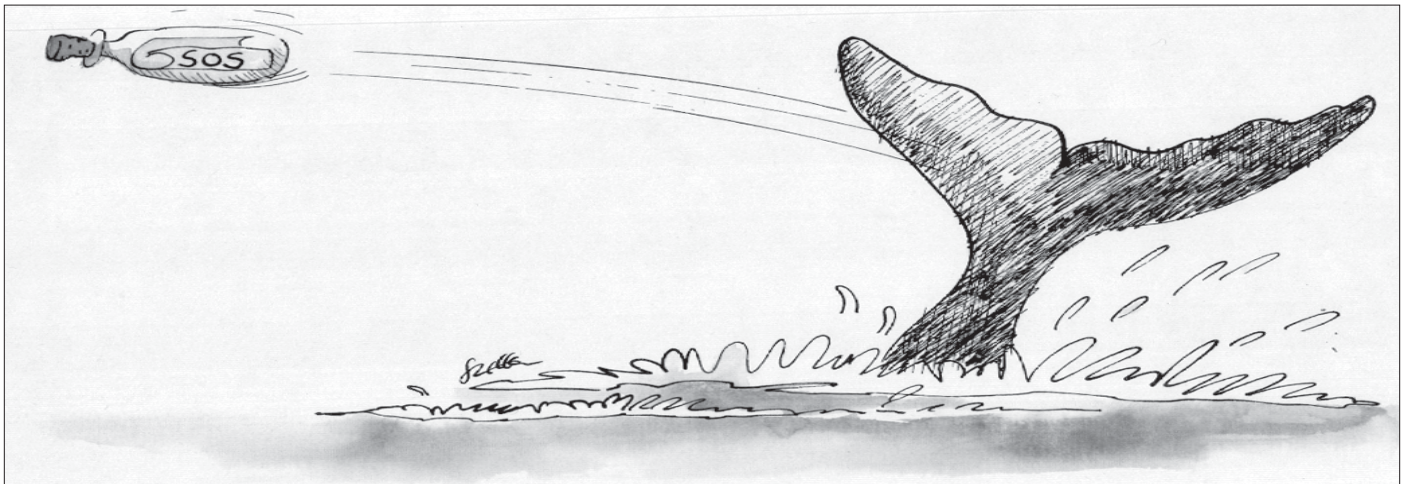
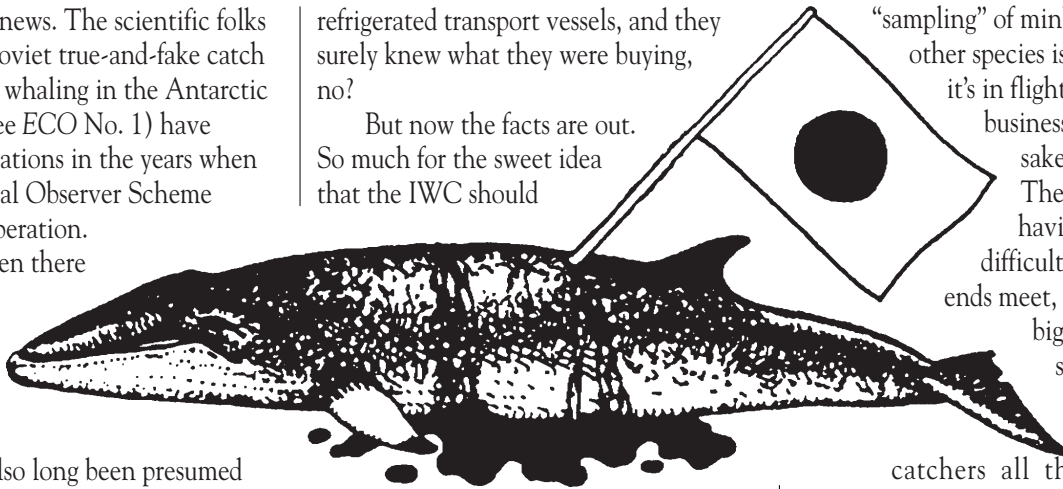
But now the facts are out. So much for the sweet idea that the IWC should

now go along with a deal involving arbitrary catch limits, and no scheme to ensure compliance with the deal!

Additionally, of course, the idea

that Japan would agree to any proposed substantial reduction in its scientific “sampling” of minke whales and other species is dead before it's in flight. This is business, for goodness sake, not science. They are already having enough difficulty in making ends meet, calling for bigger and bigger subsidies. Take a factory ship and some catchers all the way to the Antarctic just for a couple of hundred minke and a fistful of fins and humpbacks? That's not on!

—Dr. Sydney Holt



Korea Wants to Ignore Whaling Moratorium, Too

Recent press reports from the Republic of Korea indicate that the ruling government is now pushing to remove the moratorium on commercial whaling in that country.

From the beginning of the secret negotiations between Chairman Hogarth and the Japan Fisheries Agency, NGOs have warned that any agreement reached would lead to other countries cranking up their own new whaling operations.

Indeed, at the Rome IWC Intersessional meeting in March, the

Republic of Korea announced that it wanted a deal, just like Japan's, to approve whaling.

Scientists have complained about the number of whales being caught “accidentally” as “bycatch” in fishing nets off the coast of the Republic of Korea. Last year, scientists revealed that twice as many whales were being caught offshore Korea as were being reported. The nets are particularly dangerous for the small population of Western gray whales, on the verge of extinction and likely numbering not much more than

100 animals in the world.

According to the Korean *Chosun Ibo*, the Republic of Korea will argue at the IWC meeting this week, “that whale meat dishes are part of the cultural heritage and above all, that there is a need to control the growing whale population for the broader marine ecosystem.”

Of course, these are the arguments used by Japan over and over and over again.

Perhaps Japan and Korea believe that if they repeat these false claims often enough, that someone will actually believe them?