

ECO

International Whaling Commission Annual Meeting

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Japan Loses Coastal Whaling Vote

Japan's losing streak continued this week with a close vote against their proposal to award themselves a commercial quota of minke whales off their coast. Only 26 delegations supported the new whaling proposal; 29 were opposed with 3 abstentions.

Japan has used "cultural" and

"traditional" arguments to support coastal whaling for a number of years before the IWC. ECO finds it interesting that Japan dismisses concerns about whaling from other nations as being "emotional" and "not based on science." Surely, Japan's arguments for coastal whaling are

emotional pleas masking a return to commercial whaling to benefit a highly developed nation in a small sector of its local economy?

The three abstaining nations, Denmark, Kiribati, and the People's Republic of China, are usually considered part of the Japan pro-whaling bloc. ECO salutes them and the opposing nations for their stance.

Whale Watching: A Growing Money Maker

For years, environmentalists have argued that live whales are worth more than dead whales.

The whale watching industry continues to grow around the world. First started in California and Mexico with the gray whales in the 1950s, whose migratory route close inshore have facilitated trips to see the giants close up, whale watching is now a multi-billion dollar industry. The slow recovery of some whale populations, such as the Eastern gray

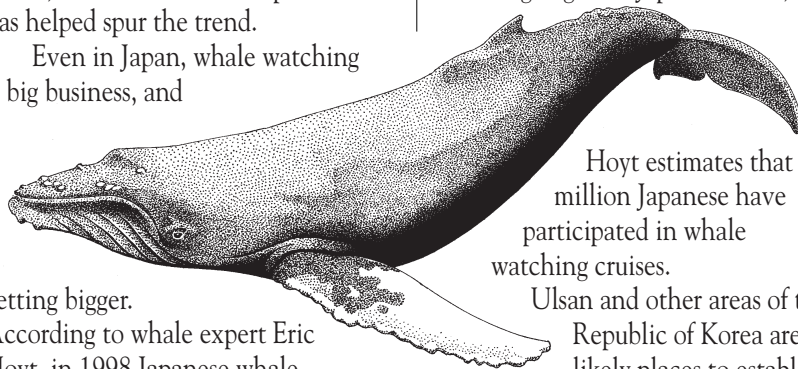
whale, from historic overexploitation has helped spur the trend.

Even in Japan, whale watching is big business, and

getting bigger.

According to whale expert Eric Hoyt, in 1998 Japanese whale watchers spent more than US\$32.4

million to see the giants. Since whale watching began in Japan in 1988,



Hoyt estimates that 1.5 million Japanese have participated in whale watching cruises.

Ulsan and other areas of the Republic of Korea are likely places to establish
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Caribbean Nations Now Want to Kill Whales

In a surprising revelation, several Caribbean nations told BBC News that they want to join the whaling nations in the slaughter. While these nations have supported Japan and its allies in votes in the IWC, the revelation that they were considering manning the whaleboats themselves is new.

"We would welcome the lifting of the moratorium," said Lloyd Pascal representing Dominica. "This is a creature like all others that people depend upon for food, and therefore because of its abundance we think

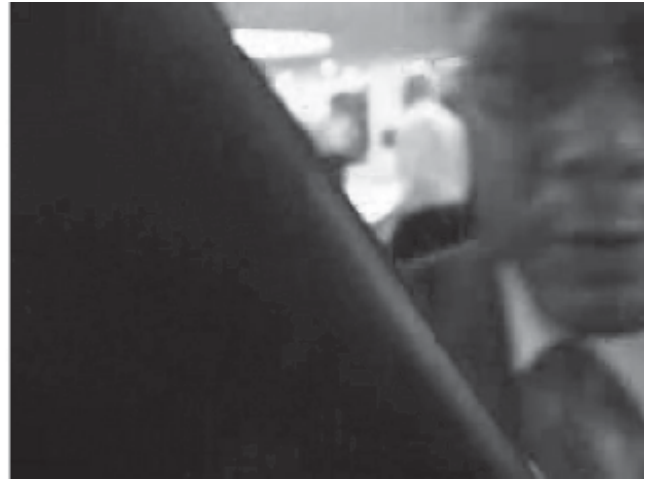
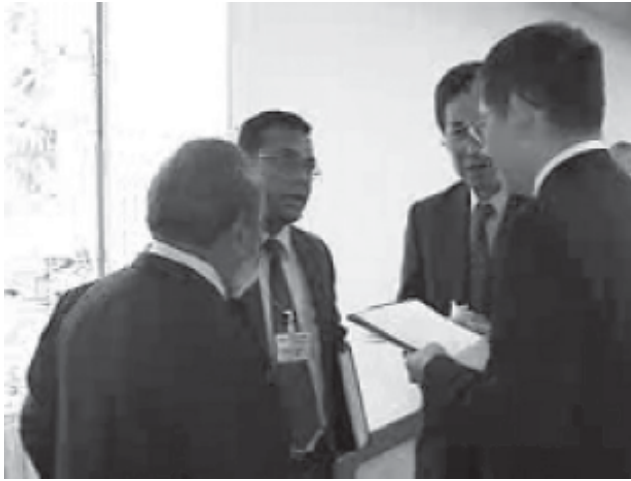
that we can take a limited amount and make some money out of it." Two other unidentified Caribbean delegates concurred. Another delegate of an unidentified African nation told BBC that his government would like to get into the whaling biz, too.

In particularly twisted logic, these delegates blamed the World Trade Organization for their need to go whaling. Because the WTO has removed preferential terms on trade in such items as sugar and bananas, these delegates say their countries are

looking for new products to export.

Whale meat instead of bananas and sugar?

Since the members of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) still overwhelmingly oppose trade in whale meat, the fantasy of Caribbean/Africa whale exports seems pretty remote. By contrast, whale watching is providing hard currency now in many Caribbean countries, a multi-million dollar industry that will only be hurt by the local would-be whale hunters if they ever get their way.



Nauru: Surely Nothing to Hide?

A TV crew caught the delegates from Nauru, newly arrived at this year's IWC meeting, in discussions with Japanese representatives.

However, the Nauru delegate did not appreciate the intrusion of the TV cameras on their discussion and blocked the lens.

So what were they discussing?
The weather?

The video clip, from which these frames were taken, is making the global rounds of news stations.

U.S. Bus for Whales

A "Save the Whales" revival took to the road this past April and May to raise awareness of the plight facing whales today. America's Whale Alliance (AWA), a coalition of over 85 U.S.-based environmental and animal welfare organizations took to the road to spread the message that the whales are not saved. Traveling in a 35-foot Stop Whaling! Bus, the tour followed the gray whale migration route up the Pacific Coast from San Diego, CA to Olympia, WA. The "whale bus" and crew attended numerous Earth Day events and stopped at elementary schools and universities along the route educating the public regarding the numerous environmental threats facing cetaceans, including the possible

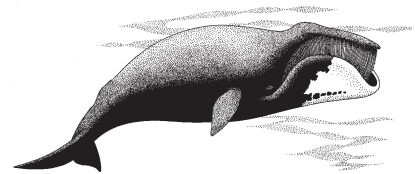
resumption of commercial whaling.

AWA was founded to address the apparent change of direction of the US government regarding its opposition to the resumption of commercial whaling. Publicly, the US government's delegation to the IWC claims to oppose commercial whaling, yet since the 2004 meeting, it has been actively negotiating the completion of a Revised Management Scheme (RMS) for the resumption of commercial whaling. AWA finds this disingenuous and maintains that the US government cannot oppose commercial whaling while actively negotiating the rules for its resumption. AWA believes that commercial whaling is outdated, unnecessary, environmentally unsound and inherently cruel.

The AWA crew handed out thousands of informational brochures and postcards addressed to the White House asking the US government to enforce and maintain the current moratorium on commercial whaling and to oppose adoption of the Revised Management Scheme

(RMS). The public was able to tour the bus, viewing educational videos and exhibits showing the serious threats to cetaceans.

AWA will embark on a cross-country and East Coast Stop Whaling Tour next year.



Thanks and So Long, Rollie!

This is United States Commissioner Rollie Schmitt's last IWC meeting, as he retires and leaves us. While *ECO* and the environmental community did not always agree with Rollie, we have always found him open to discussion, respectful of all viewpoints, and a tried and true leader of US efforts at the IWC. Thanks, Rollie!

ECO

ECO is published on the occasion of the 57th Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission.

Sands of Challenge

As delegates conclude IWC 57 Administrative Matters, and thank Ulsan for its open arms and generous hospitality, thoughts can't help but drift to the now approaching Annual Meeting for 2006 in the Eastern Caribbean.

Just as we have all enjoyed the wonderful side trips in Italy last year and the bus tours from Ulsan this year, the IWC 58 venue in St. Kitts and Nevis, featuring the sand and sun

of the beautiful Caribbean, offer us an opportunity to visit nearby Carib island nations.

Whether one applauds or deplores the interventions of the nations of St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Dominica, Grenada, Antigua & Barbuda, or St. Kitts and Nevis, ECO urges all to plan an extra week or two to sample the island life and leisure in all six of the IWC Caribbean Island nations.

Swim, dive, sail, eat, drink, and by all means join one of the many

whale and dolphin watching cruises.

Be sure to bring your IWC talking points for the meeting itself, along with the sunscreen lotion. If the St. Kitts and Nevis meeting is anything like Grenada (IWC 1999), the regional Caribbean pastime of vigorous debate is undoubtedly still alive and well.

Safe travel and remember the famous Caribbean proverb: "Beware green bananas, bad rum, and Daven Joseph, defender of camels."

Whale Watching, concluded from page 1 a new whale watching industry. Hoyt reports that 35 species of cetaceans are found in offshore waters of Korea, and scientific surveys are available to plan trips.

Hoyt's latest description of whale watching opportunities locally, *Watching Whales and Dolphins in Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Korea*, is available at this IWC meeting courtesy of the Whale & Dolphin Conservation Society and the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

Japan's new JARPA II "scientific" whaling scheme will, despite IWC opposition, target several new stocks of whales in the Antarctic, including endangered stocks of humpback whales that form the basis of the growing whale watching industry in Australia and New Zealand. Australia alone puts the value of its whale watching business at \$273 million. Japan's coastal whaling schemes and current slaughter of thousands of dolphins and porpoises restricts the value and growth of whale watching in those waters.

Japan's pro-whaling delegation at the IWC has claimed that they see whale watching and whale hunting as "not contradictory."

But Japan's claim is likely quite

wrong. Certainly the loss of any Antarctic humpback or fin whales, even a few, could seriously restrict the recovery of some of these populations. Many scientists have expressed concerns about the health of these humpbacks and fins and the effect a new round of slaughter ... sorry, science ... will have on these fragile populations. The status of many exploited dolphin and porpoise populations around Japan are largely unknown.

Also important is the effect of hunting on dolphins and whales that survive Japan's bloody science experiment and local slaughter. Will these exploited cetaceans tolerate the close approach of whale watching boats off tourist areas if they are hunted near Japan and in the Antarctic?

Observers of gray whales, who have long experience in approaching them off California and Mexico, know that gray whales behave differently in the presence of vessels. Some ignore the vessels, or will on occasion approach vessels (especially in the Baja birthing lagoons). But other individuals are extremely skittish around boats and will avoid vessels. Such grays use tricks first observed by early whalers, such as changing direction underwater to throw off pursuit or "snorkeling"

(coming to the surface very quickly, with only the blowhole exposed for seconds needed to quickly grab a breath) to avoid being exposed by their spout. Are these behaviors simply caused by individual differences? Or are these cagey whales that avoid detection the survivors of the chase and hunt of gray whales in the Arctic?

It is further well-documented by scientists that dolphin populations in the Eastern Tropical Pacific (ETP), which are regularly targeted, chased and netted by tuna fishing vessels using purse seine nets to catch the tuna which swim beneath, will avoid ships and rush away at great speeds when vessels are in the area. By contrast, dolphin populations in the ETP that are not regular targets of the tuna industry can be closely approached and will even ride the bows of vessels, within feet of observers.

Japan's silly and unscientific kill of humpbacks and fin whales may well strangle the East Asia's and the South Pacific's whale watching industry, with little benefit to Japan's people. Dolphins and porpoises in Japan's coastal waters are worth far more alive for nature study and tourism than as high-priced slabs of meat in markets.

Individualism Counts

ECO thanks the efforts of the many members of delegations and NGO's who annually attend the IWC meeting to support the protection of whales. But we also remember the individuals, many of whom have attended IWC meetings for years because of their deep conviction and support for whales.

One such individual is Bernhard Bechter, known to many as "Bernhard the Brave" because of his intrepid attitude towards protesting commercial and "scientific" whaling. Bernhard arrived at this year's Ulsan meeting via car, ferry and bus, rather than via his traditional transportation of bicycle, kayak or paraglider. Bernhard's journey took him from his native Austria to Norway, Sweden and Finland, and then clear across Russia ... 20,000 km in all, and by no means all of it on paved surfaces.

A dedicated protester for the past 10 years, Bernhard has been arrested half a dozen times, hit by cars 4 times, robbed twice, and spent more nights in a sleeping bag than in a bed. He experienced 60°C on his bicycle in

the Oman desert, and -70 deg. C pulling his sled across frozen ice in an Arctic winter.

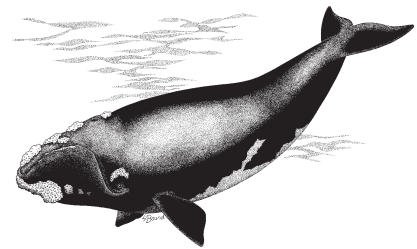
Quite possibly, Bernhard's biggest battle with elemental Nature came with the cancer he has beaten in the last couple of years. Now in remission, Bernhard plans to be back at the IWC again and again... until the whales are truly saved. ECO salutes him and the many other dedicated volunteers that work for whales.



Quotable

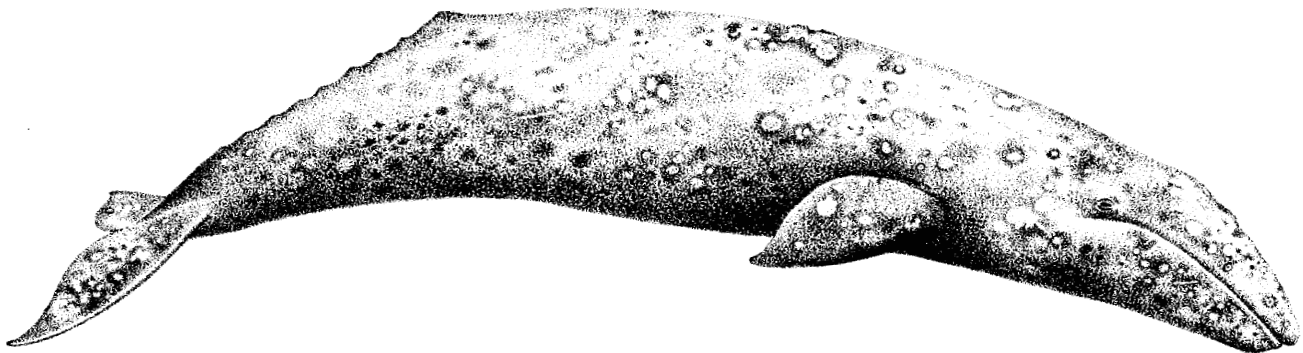
"Countries such as Australia and New Zealand say they would not let a single whale be hunted no matter how healthy whale stocks are ... These fanatic anti-whaling countries may include Italy, Germany and Britain. But there are some other anti-whaling countries that are a bit cooler."

— Hideki Moronuki, *New Zealand Herald*, June 18, 2005.



"Mr. Maenuu [Solomon Islands Commissioner] did not dispute suggestions that Japanese aid helped change his nation's vote. He pointed instead to the 'billions' of dollars in Japanese aid to India, an anti-whaling nation, and to African countries. 'Why not talk about that?' he asked."

— Andrew Darby, *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 23, 2005.



Conservation Stink

The IWC's Conservation Committee—its newest—got off to a rocky start following its birth in Berlin; its very existence immediately challenged. Iceland wanted to change its mandate and change the name to something like the "committee for

sustainable development." Fortunately, enough nations (Brazil, Belgium and others) have hung in long enough to make it apparent to (almost) all that conservation issues have a real place within the IWC. Two topics have been selected for initial attention: ship strikes and

"stinky" gray whales. After a barrage of criticism yesterday, spread by Iceland, backed up by Norway and Japan's compliant allies, there was general agreement that an explanation for gray whales being so polluted they are unfit for even dog food is worth seeking. It's a start!