

Eco

International Whaling Commission Annual Meeting

In this issue:

- Russian Roulette
- Viva Vaquita
- Frozen Preserves
- Meals That Kill

Previous issues:

<http://www.savedolphins.eii.org>

IWC66 Postscript: Beating the Drum

By Paul Spong PhD

Sidney Holt's new book, *Save the Whales! Memoirs of a Whale Hugger*, may not yet be a best seller (it will be), but it encourages me to believe that we (the whales) will win. Win what? The privilege of spending the next generation, hundreds, perhaps thousands of years swimming around in a too warm ocean, deprived of sustenance, lonely for life? In my darker moments that just about sums up how I feel about the outcome of IWC66 and what lies ahead. I can't say this out loud of course; it would depress others as well as myself. We must press on.

The most encouraging thing about this meeting was the presence of the demonstrators, who will not let go. There were two of them. Howie and Arno. They started at the front of the hotel, hanging their banners on the barricades that had

been erected to keep demonstrators at bay. Everyone who arrived had to pass by them, so they were noticed. When their numbers swelled to three (Bernhard), they set up another operation at the back of the hotel, the lower level where people went out to lunch or take a walk. When that happened, hotel security locked the back entrance door. You had to unlock it with a room key card.

Security was very tight at this meeting, with the hotel lobby being constantly patrolled and access to the meeting requiring scanning an ID badge that displayed a photo. The only time it was breached was when Sidney Holt went out to visit the demonstrators. Sidney is pretty mobile for a 90 year old but he uses two sticks to walk and appreciates the occasional arm to hold on to. After his visit, Howie Cook, the eternal IWC demonstrator offered his arm to Sidney, and they walked back to the hotel entrance together. They

were stopped by security, and surrounded. After a protest by Howie about the cruelty of not letting an old man in with a little help, they were admitted and walked together across the lobby. Unnoticed at first by security because the evidence was on his back, Howie was wearing a Sea Shepherd t-shirt. It was the only time Sea Shepherd breached the meeting, though their presence was felt, both in the Safety at Sea session and in one of the demo banners.

One day there was even a sailboat stationed offshore that had hoisted a Sea Shepherd sail. I'm not sure what happened to it, as it was only there on that one day. Probably chased or towed away. Out of sight out of mind. Ha. In the old and not so old days, when there were dozens, sometimes hundreds of demonstrators, even a giant inflatable whale, the scene was

(Continued on Page Two)

Morishita's Crocodile Tears for Traditional Whaling Are A Joke

By Captain Paul Watson

The arrogant hypocrisy of Japan knows absolutely no bounds.

Now they are pleading for four small Japanese coastal communities to kill whales as part of their long tradition and culture.

Japanese whaling Commissioner Joji Morishita urged nations to look beyond their "principled position against whaling under any circumstances. It's not like one side is bad and one side is good. This is not a dichotomy or a black and white situation," he said.

The truth is that Morishita knows that this is a bogus argument. Japan is simply using these communities as an excuse to keep killing whales, and the proof of this is the fact that the aboriginal people of Japan, the Ainu, have been prohibited from killing whales for the past 150 years. When it comes to the Ainu, Japan ignores the arguments on culture, tradition and so-called "food culture".

And it is not just restricted to whaling. The traditional salmon fishery by the Ainu has also been prohibited, yet the Tokyo fish market displays the corpses of hundreds of

thousands of fish everyday plundered from all the world's oceans.

What does Morishita have to say about this?

"I would not claim that my government is always consistent," Joji Morishita, director for international negotiations for the Japanese government's Fisheries Agency, said when asked about the discrepancy between how Japan wants its whalers to be treated and the restrictions it imposes on the Ainu community. "You cannot be

(Continued on Page Four)

*(Continued from front page IWC66
Postscript: Beating the Drum)*

bigger, louder, rowdier, cars honking, voices raised, a battle joined. Where has all that passion gone? Truth be told, the whales have yet to be saved.

I am pissed off (excuse the language) mad about the outcome of this meeting, mad at the neglect, mad at the lost opportunity, and mad at the fake camaraderie. The whales lost every turn at this meeting, not exactly wholesale slaughter, more like death by small cuts.

Small cetaceans were the biggest losers. I know the Irawaddy dolphin will be gone before we blink; I doubt the Maui dolphin will be there to save next time we meet; and I doubt the vaquita will still exist, despite the desperate measures finally agreed to at IWC66. I say agreed to but that wasn't really so. When the emergency vaquita resolution finally came to the floor on Friday, the last of this grim affair, Japan read out a long list of countries besides itself that were so, so sympathetic to the vaquita plight that they could not oppose the resolution, but still would not participate in a collective effort to save this beauty (*see list pg. 3*).

Hanging the vaquita out to dry, dropping it off a high cliff with no parachute are images that come to mind. What on Earth do Joji Morishita and his cronies not understand about the word extinction? I suppose I should use Japan, not Morishita and it, not him, but truth be told, he personifies the enemy. Politeness yes, but not more. I'm thinking that it might be better to have Mr. Morishita as the Chair at the next meeting because his stiletto-like mind will not immediately be available to Japan on the floor, and his role as Chair will have to be fair, or at least

appear to be fair.

The Chair this time, Switzerland's Bruno Mainini also attempted to be fair, and except for one glaring exception for the most part accomplished that. The exception came at the end of Day Four. Bruno had been instrumental in giving NGOs a voice, unheard of before him at the IWC though common in other international fora such as CITES (The Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species). This time, he allowed NGOs to speak freely, time permitting, until almost the end of Day Four. The topic was IWC communications with other international organizations. Whale and Dolphin Conservation's (WDC) Carolina Cassini started to read a prepared statement on behalf of numerous NGOs about Japan's violation of the CITES prohibition of trade in whale products by referring to sales of whale meat and other whale bits by a Japanese online retailer. You can have your order for pretty much anything that comes from whales killed for research shipped to you anywhere in the world and paid for in Yen, US dollars, pounds or Euros. Probably any currency will do.

Caro's statement produced consternation among Japan's delegation, many of whom were clearly agitated, and Bruno cut her off, telling her to keep her comments short. Caro started again, but didn't get far before Bruno cut her off again. She had about 2 lines to go, but that was it. Over. It was hard to know whether Bruno has responded to a nonverbal Japanese complaint, but everyone noticed what he had done. Given his tolerance of a previous very long intervention by an IGO (intergovernmental organization) on the topic, Bruno's action was patently unfair. Later, he apologized. The irony of the incident was the WDC's story about Japan cheating on CITES rules got noticed, a big accomplishment in this

somnolent room.

For decades, Norway has gotten clean away with killing more whales than anyone else. It has done so again, by keeping its head down and barely saying a word except No or Yes according to Japan's script. Why is not a puzzle. It's because Norway is rich and can thumb its nose at the world. It is a European country, but refuses to join the EU. Norway first got rich off whale oil. That was way before North Sea oil came along, making it even richer. Today, giant blue whale jawbones stand as sentinels at the entrance to Sandefjord's richest estates (Sandefjord being Norway's whaling capital). Mute testaments to the past. No words need to be said. And that's what we've gotten from Norway at this meeting. No words. None needed. Just business as usual.

Why is there no outrage? Not just about Norway. There's a long list, for me starting with the Maui dolphin. I think it must be because I'm a New Zealander and still hold great affection for my homeland, but New Zealand's treatment of the Maui dolphin is, in a word, disgraceful. I realize that the New Zealand's IWC Commissioner is a first timer in this forum, but she is reading from the same script we heard last time, and the time before that. "We are monitoring the situation." Deathspeak. Just 53 Maui dolphins are left alive, proof that the monitoring is precise. Outrageous.

Voices should be raised, solutions demanded, but nothing by way of protest is heard in the room: Just a polite, thank you New Zealand. I am speechless. New Zealand, so good on so many issues that affect the welfare of whales, is blatantly hypocritical about the fate of this critically endangered dolphin in its own waters. The Maui dolphin only occupies a small ocean space. Why are gill nets not completely banned? Why are seismic air guns not

(Continued from page two IWC66 Postscript: Beating the Drum)

silenced?

It's not as if whales do not have great allies and defenders here. They do. Chief among them besides Monaco are the Latin American countries, members of the "BA" group, BA for Buenos Aires where Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Peru, Columbia, Panama, Costa Rica and Mexico came together to form a bloc that is the most vocal and persistent ally of whales in this room. They are impressive, well prepared and will not concede, not even about a violation of the rules on aboriginal whaling in Greenland most IWC members want to sweep under the rug. In 2013 and 2014 Greenland hunters killed whales without at IWC quota. Under IWC rules this was an infraction, but Denmark, which represents Greenland at the IWC refuses to acknowledge it. The problem came about because a Greenland quota was not agreed at the 2012 IWC meeting in Panama, and Greenland went ahead anyway. I doubt whether anyone disputed the need for Greenland's aboriginal people to hunt for food, but what happened was still an infraction. All it would have taken to settle the issue was Denmark (Greenland) acknowledging and apologizing,

possibly with a promise not to do it again. That did not happen.

Time and again, Brazil and Argentina supported by their BA compatriots have introduced a proposal to make the South Atlantic Ocean a sanctuary. Time and again they have been denied. Yet they press on, meeting every defeat with new determination. Next time, in 2018 they will be on their own turf, so they will have home court advantage. We will see whether that will be enough to push them over the $\frac{3}{4}$ majority line, but I have a feeling the tide will change, and South Atlantic whales will be protected at least. Besides, I am quite sure that more than 3 demonstrators for whales will show up next time, and that will help.

As the meeting drew to a close on Friday, Luxembourg's Commissioner Pierre Gallego brought a light moment to the room, announcing a tie competition. Photos of 13 ties worn by male delegates were displayed on the screen. Only ladies were allowed to vote. At one point in the voting, Russia was cited for cheating, bringing laughter. The result was close, but Japan's assistant Commissioner won with his Moby Dock tie. Symbolic.

Where do we go from here? Fortunately, there is a way forward. An Ethical Ban on commercial whaling. The idea comes from Paul

Gouin, one of the architects of the moratorium on commercial whaling that was agreed by the IWC in 1982. Paul disappeared from the IWC scene for decades after his victory for whales, but like me, has resurfaced. His point is a great one. We now know so much about whales – their brains, their sentience, their societies – that virtually a no brainer that we should not be killing them. So let's stop. Period.

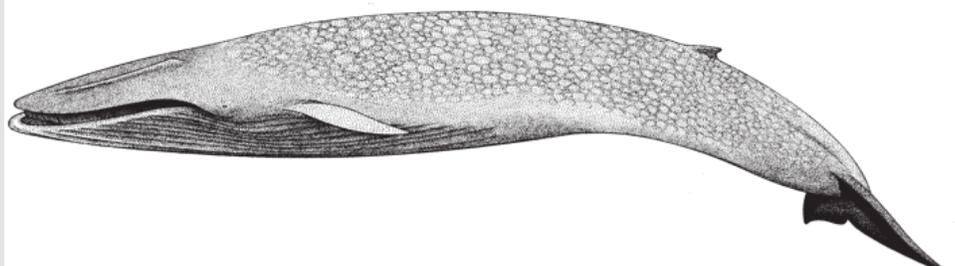
Over the next years, we'll see where this idea leads. It will take just two countries to propose an Ethical Ban on commercial whaling and put it on the agenda for the 2018 meeting in Brazil, as a resolution. Aboriginal and subsistence whaling will be exempted, but the proposal will be that all commercial whaling is banned, permanently. It may take a few rounds to accomplish this, but I do believe that day will come. Peace in the oceans, at last.

* Antigua & Barbuda, Benin, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Iceland, Japan, Kenya, Kiribati, Laos, Mauritania, Mongolia, Morocco, Nauru, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & The Grenadines, Russian Federation, Suriname, Tanzania, Togo, Tuvalu.

A New Chair for IWC 2018

One of the final steps that IWC took on Friday was to bring in a new Chairman for the next meeting in 2018, presumably in Brazil. The Chairmanship will be filled by Commissioner Joji Morishita, head of the Japan delegation. It will be interesting to see how Mr. Morishita handles the role of Chair given Japan's antipathy to the majority of the IWC, but we are

giving him the benefit of the doubt. For now.



*(Continued from front page
Morishita's Crocodile Tears for
Traditional Whaling Are a Joke)*

perfect on every issue and unfortunately that's happening in the case of the Ainu." (*Los Angeles Times* Nov. 24th, 2007)

Well then, I guess we should just accept that the Japanese government has a very racist policy on culture and tradition. Morishita believes it is not important because the Japanese people do not care about the Ainu claims.

"The Japanese public knows nothing about the traditional Ainu salmon fishery", Morishita said, explaining that "governments are not famous for moving proactively."

"We are prepared to protect the way of life for our small communities," Morishita said.

Except of course for the Ainu communities.

Morishita says that the rest of the world refuses to compromise. Of course not. Would the police compromise with a bank robber, for example, allowing him to steal some money from some banks using the excuse that he has a family tradition of robbing banks?

Japanese whaling in the Southern Ocean is illegal. It has been declared illegal by the International Court of Justice in 2014, by the Australian Federal Court in Australian waters since 2008 and by the International Whaling Commission since 1986. Japan has been fined one million dollars by the Australian Federal Court but refuses to pay the fine or stop whaling in Australian waters. Japan said in 2014 they would abide by the ICJ decision and after a year changed their mind.

My question to Morishita is how does he expect us to compromise with Japanese criminal activities? And why would he expect conservationists to compromise with Japan when Japan can't even

compromise with their own indigenous peoples?

The situation is in fact black and white. One side is bad and that is the side that viciously and mercilessly slaughters these highly intelligent socially complex self-aware sentient beings. One side stands for death and one side stands for life, and I don't think it can be more clearly defined that the fact that one side is good and the other side is evil based solely on the actions of each side.

Japan demands compromise after manipulating the votes to deny the establishment of the South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary. Japan demands compromise after three decades of criminal activity on the grounds that as an economic super-power they can do whatever they damn well please, anywhere they wish to do it.

Japan has no traditional or cultural claim in slaughtering whales in the Southern Ocean. Claiming that four small communities have a 2,500 year tradition of killing whales does not translate into Japan having that same tradition. This is like saying that the tradition of cock-fighting in some Hawaiian villages means that cock-fighting represents American culture tradition.

In fact the United States has a far older and more pervasive traditional claim to whaling, but that "tradition" has been tossed onto the trash heap of history thankfully.

A healthy whale population is essential for a healthy phytoplankton population, and a healthy phytoplankton population is essential for human survival, and Japan's continued slaughter and diminishment of whale numbers is a crime against humanity. It is ignorant, destructive and petty and driven by an insane nationalistic fervor that spits in the face of the laws of the international community, ecology and decency.

Sea Shepherd is opposed to the killing of whales by anyone, anywhere, for any reason. There is simply no justification for the billion

continued diminishment of whale populations and the horrific cruelty involved with the slaughter of whales.

Asking us to compromise with slaughter, with killing, with cruelty, with enslavement of dolphins and with blatant disregard for international law is unacceptable. There can be no compromise with these violent criminals, and we need to keep fighting against the evil of whaling until we stamp out the abominable disgrace that shames all of humanity.

Japan will continue to manipulate and buy votes and will continue to impose their incredibly violent arrogance on the nation of whales and dolphins, but our movement gets stronger every year, and it is our relentless passion, our courage and our resolve that will defeat their maritime crusade of death, cruelty and destruction in the waters of our planet.

When the whales are diminished, we are diminished and when the whales die, the Ocean will die and when the Ocean dies, we all die!

Original article at:
<https://www.facebook.com/SeaShepherdConservationSociety>

For any previous editions or additional copies of ECO contact editor Mark J. Palmer at markjpalmer@earthisland.org



Editorial: It's Time for Japan to Change its Controversial Whaling Strategy

The Asahi Shimbun Nov. 1, 2016

The Japanese envoy to the latest plenary session of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) has said the discussions at the meeting represented “a step forward and a step backward” for Japan.

But the assessment is highly disputable. There are concerns that what transpired at the conference, held Oct. 20-28 in the Slovenian seaside town of Portoroz, could only strengthen the view that Japan is ignoring international criticism of its scientific whaling program.

At the conference, New Zealand and Australia denounced Japan for resuming its controversial scientific whaling efforts in the Antarctic late last year. A resolution to tighten the procedures was adopted by a majority.

Japan opposed the resolution, claiming it is beyond the boundaries of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling. Saying the resolution is not legally binding, Tokyo indicated it will continue its program in the Antarctic. Japan also plans to submit a new plan for scientific whaling in the northwestern Pacific. Meanwhile, Japan made its own move at the IWC conference by proposing “dialogue” over the fundamental reasons of the bitter international division over whaling. The proposal was accepted.

The Japanese envoy apparently viewed the beginning of the dialogue as “a step forward” and the adoption of the resolution on scientific whaling as “a step backward” for the Japanese government.

It seems, however, that the backward step was bigger than the forward step. In other words, Japan appears to have lost more than it

gained.

Two years ago, the International Court of Justice ordered a halt to Japan's scientific whaling program in the Antarctic, concluding that the hunts as they were carried out could not be seen as being undertaken for purposes of scientific research. But Japan resumed whaling after making changes to the program, which it said were in line with the ruling, including a reduction in the number of whales it harvests.

The IWC plenary session held half a year after the ICJ's decision adopted a resolution requiring that scientific whaling be based on discussions at the plenary sessions.

Since the world whaling regulatory body holds plenary sessions biennially, Japan was expected to wait for this year's session before making any major move related to scientific whaling. But it revived the program before the event.

The latest resolution is a response by the anti-whaling camp to Japan's action and aimed at imposing further restrictions on its scientific whaling.

The situation signals a vicious cycle in which Japan continues taking strong actions according to its whaling policy, further antagonizing anti-whaling nations. The Japanese government is eagerly advocating “dialogue” over the fundamental reasons behind the long-running dispute between the two sides. But the outlook of this proposal remains murky.

The IWC has been the main arena for confrontation between the pro- and anti-whaling camps since the body adopted a moratorium on commercial whaling in 1982.

It has long been clear that the dispute is between two fundamentally different positions on whaling. One side regards whales as

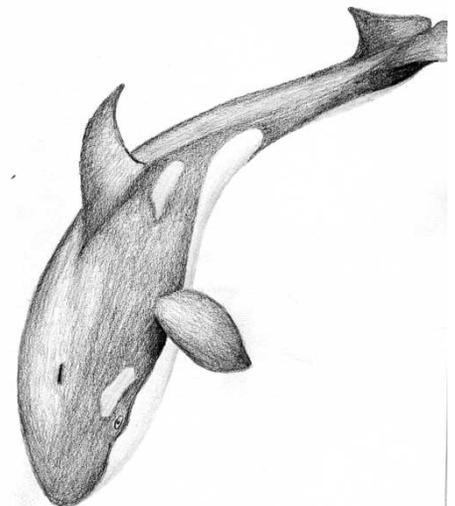
food resources, while the other sees them as wild animals that need to be protected.

Demand for whale meat in Japan has declined sharply over time. But the government spends several billion of yen annually on subsidies to keep the scientific whaling program alive.

The question that the government should ask itself is whether it can serve Japan's national interests by sticking to its apparently “dead-end” policy.

It is clearly time for the government to change its obstinate adherence to its whaling strategy.

It should respond to the anti-whaling voices of the international community while making efforts to win international support for the kind of small-scale coastal whaling that has been traditional at certain places in Japan including Taiji, Wakayama Prefecture.



Vaquita Resolution Approved

Environmental and animal welfare groups submitted a strong statement to the IWC this week on behalf of the Mexican harbor porpoise known as the vaquita, “The vaquita (*Phocoena sinus*) is the world’s most imperiled cetacean species.

“Between 2011 and 2015, the vaquita population decrease by an estimated 80 percent as a result of bycatch in gillnets, many of them set illegally to capture the totoaba (*Totoaba macdonaldi*). Both the vaquita and the totoaba are designated as critically endangered by the International Union for Nature Conservation. Based on the most recent surveys, fewer than 60 vaquitas remain and the species is on the brink of extinction.”

Despite previous opposition at the IWC from several Caribbean

client states of Japan, a resolution was approved by consensus Thursday, Oct. 27th, by the full IWC. The resolution:

“EXPRESSES DEEP CONCERN that the vaquita numbers less than 59 animals and is facing imminent extinction;

“AFFIRMS that only a permanent, complete, and effective gillnet ban in all fisheries operating in the upper Gulf of California will prevent the imminent extinction of the vaquita;

“COMMENDS the Mexican Government for the Strategy on the Comprehensive Care of the Upper Gulf of California that includes an interagency enforcement programme, a two-year gillnet ban (from May 2015), compensation for fishermen and those who work in fishery-related activities and the

development of alternative fishing gear;”

The resolution concludes by stating the IWC: “URGES Contracting Governments to support Mexico’s efforts to prevent the extinction of the vaquita by assisting in providing financial resources as well as technical and socio-economic expertise” and calls upon the IWC Secretariat to forward the resolution to the CITES, FAO and IUCN Secretariats.

Copies of the full resolution: https://archive.iwc.int/pages/download_progress.php?ref=6315&search=%21collection24471&order_by=relevance&offset=0&restypes=&staresearch=&archive=0&per_page=240&default_sort_direction=DESC&sort=DESC&context=Modal&k=&curpos=20&size=&ext=pdf

Antarctic Marine Reserve Established

In a major breakthrough, a huge 600,000 square miles of the Ross Sea of Antarctica has been established by 24 countries and the EU, Reuters reports.

The reserve will be off limits to commercial fishing for 35 years, protecting the important ecosystem and demonstrating remarkable restraint on the behalf of the countries that might normally be expected to exploit the area, not protect it.

The parties to the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Living Marine Resources met in Hobart, Australia, and adopted the preserve after Russia, which had blocked the sanctuary five times in the past, finally agree. The Commission requires approval from all member states for adoption of action.

“The Ross Sea Region MPA will

safeguard one of the last unspoiled ocean wilderness areas on the planet – home to unparalleled marine biodiversity and thriving communities of penguins, seals, whales, seabirds, and fish,” U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said.

There are limitations. Despite its immense size, the protected area is still only 12 percent of the entire Antarctic Ocean. And fishing is only prohibited within 425,000 square miles of the zone. Some fishing will be allowed for krill and --- sawfish? Yes, there apparently is a fishery for sawfish...

So far, no word from the Save the Sawfish organizations.

Copies of full article: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-environment-antarctic-park-idUSKCN12S02C>



Minimata Convention on Mercury Pollution Endorsed by IWC

Mercury is the second most poisonous substance on Earth, next to plutonium. And it is ubiquitous in many fishes, especially fishes high on the food chain. Mercury is particularly high in whales and dolphins served in places in Japan and the Faroe Islands. However, unlike Faroe Island health authorities whom have issued strong warnings against eating pilot whale meat due to mercury contamination, the Japan health authorities have been muted by the bureaucrats in the Japan Fisheries Agency. Eating whale and dolphin meat can kill you, but whaling is apparently more important to Japan's corrupt

government than human health.

A resolution of support for the Minimata Convention (ironically, negotiated in Japan) was approved on a vote of 38 to 23.

A second resolution on "food security" pushed by Caribbean client nations of Japan (ironically, including several that apparently have laws protecting cetaceans in their waters) was thankfully put off, showing that mercury poisoning of the brain is not yet at critical levels in the IWC delegations.

Copies of full resolution:
<https://archive.iwc.int/pages/terms.php?ref=6184&search=%21collectio>

[n24471&order_by=relevance&offset=0&restypes=&staresearch=&archive=0&per_page=0&default_sort_direction=DESC&sort=DESC&context=Root&k=&curpos=14&url=%2Fpages%2Fdownload_progress.php%3Fref%3D6184%26search%3D%2521collection24471%26order_by%3Drelevance%26offset%3D0%26restypes%3D%26staresearch%3D%26archive%3D0%26per_page%3D0%26default_sort_direction%3DDESC%26sort%3DDESC%26context%3DRoot%26k%3D%26curpos%3D14%26size%3D%26ext%3Dpdf](https://archive.iwc.int/pages/terms.php?ref=6184&search=%21collection24471&order_by=relevance&offset=0&restypes=&staresearch=&archive=0&per_page=0&default_sort_direction=DESC&sort=DESC&context=Root&k=&curpos=14&url=%2Fpages%2Fdownload_progress.php%3Fref%3D6184%26search%3D%2521collection24471%26order_by%3Drelevance%26offset%3D0%26restypes%3D%26staresearch%3D%26archive%3D0%26per_page%3D0%26default_sort_direction%3DDESC%26sort%3DDESC%26context%3DRoot%26k%3D%26curpos%3D14%26size%3D%26ext%3Dpdf)

IWC Approves Measures to Curtails Japan's Scientific Whaling

On Thursday, Oct. 27th, the conservation-minded majority of the countries at the IWC approved Australia's resolution to try to curtail Japan's illegal "scientific" whaling scheme in the Antarctic and North Pacific Oceans.

Since the implementation of the commercial whaling moratorium during the Antarctic whaling season of 1995-96, the Japanese whaling industry and government have abused the scientific permit system of the IWC to allow massive killing, year after year, of whales that wind up on the restaurant plates of Japanese citizens. Japan has persisted in "scientific" whaling for decades, despite condemnation by the Scientific Committee, the IWC, and an overwhelming ruling against Japan by the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

This year, the government of Australia introduced a resolution calling on the IWC itself to prohibit issuing of scientific permits for whaling unless approved in advance by the IWC.

The resolution notes that: "the Government of Japan, notwithstanding Resolution 2014-5, issued special permits for its "New Scientific Whale Research Program in the Antarctic Ocean (NEWREP-A)" before: i) the Scientific Committee had provided advice to the Commission in accordance with the instructions in Resolution 2014-5; ii) the Commission had considered the report of the Scientific Committee and assessed whether Japan had acted in accordance with the review process described in Resolution 2014-5 and, in accordance with Article VI..." The resolution did not pass without a fight. After failing to reach consensus, the resolution was voted on and adopted with 34 yes votes, 17 no votes and 10 abstentions. A new working group will be established by the IWC to review any scientific permits (even bogus ones) and recommendations of the Scientific Committee.

Needless to say, the odds are on

Japanese whalers ignoring the resolution and continuing to ignore the IWC and the rest of the world.

Copy of the resolution:
https://archive.iwc.int/pages/terms.php?ref=6181&search=%21collection24471&order_by=relevance&offset=0&restypes=&staresearch=&archive=0&per_page=0&default_sort_direction=DESC&sort=DESC&context=Root&k=&curpos=11&url=%2Fpages%2Fdownload_progress.php%3Fref%3D6181%26search%3D%2521collection24471%26order_by%3Drelevance%26offset%3D0%26restypes%3D%26staresearch%3D%26archive%3D0%26per_page%3D0%26default_sort_direction%3DDESC%26sort%3DDESC%26context%3DRoot%26k%3D%26curpos%3D11%26size%3D%26ext%3Dpdf

(See related story on pg. 8)

Russia Is Vital to Protecting Antarctica's Ross Sea

By José María Figueres

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica – The key to protecting Antarctica's Ross Sea may well lie with Russia. On Monday the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, comprising 24 nations and the European Union, will discuss, once again, the creation of a large, marine protected area in the Southern Ocean. All but one of the commission members has supported safeguarding this vital region and its threatened inhabitants. The holdout has been Russia, which has blocked similar efforts in recent years.

But there are reasons to hope that this year may be different.

The commission was created in 1982 to avert the overfishing and deterioration that is happening throughout the world's oceans. Antarctica is particularly vulnerable because so much life there depends on one tiny creature, the krill. Penguins, whales, seabirds and seals all eat krill, as do many other marine animals. These shrimplike invertebrates are the linchpin of the entire ecosystem, and it was the increasing commercial exploitation of this creature that led to the international commission's creation and the growing awareness of the vulnerability of Antarctica's ocean.

It's easy to take such resources for granted since 70 percent of the planet is covered by water. But human influence and interference has grown enormously as we've harnessed technology to plumb the marine depths and scoop up the bounty. For instance, while most of us don't eat krill, we now use them to feed farm-raised salmon and incorporate them in cosmetics and nutritional supplements. The faster gathering and processing of these tiny creatures threatens to remove a key source of nutrition from the Southern Ocean's food web.

Oceans are under stress across the globe. Climate change, overfishing, habitat destruction and pollution endanger not only marine animals but

also food, jobs and communities. The oceans provide us with more than 80 million metric tons of fish each year. But the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that about 89 percent of global wild fish stocks are either overfished or fully fished, a worrisome trend when fish remain a key source of animal protein for over half the world's population. Ocean acidification, caused by atmospheric carbon dioxide being absorbed by the seas, could make as much as 10 percent of the Arctic Ocean corrosive enough to dissolve the shells of sea creatures by 2018, with much worse to come.

There is no single solution to all these problems. But research has demonstrated that the creation of large, fully protected marine reserves can play an important part in helping to regenerate ocean life and buy time in an age of climate change, if we can set aside key areas before they become overfished and degraded by warming waters.

President Obama knew this when he recently expanded the marine protected area in the northwest Hawaiian Islands and around the canyons and underwater mountains off the New England coast. He knew that these reserves would offer a place for rare and threatened species to shelter and breed, helping to repopulate surrounding regions and build resilience in the face of climate change and overfishing. The Ross Sea in the Southern Ocean of the Antarctic is similarly important. With some 16,000 species, many of them unique to the cold environment, it's still relatively pristine and can still be saved for a sustainable future.

And so it comes down to Russia. On the very day that Mr. Obama creates the world's largest marine reserve, Russia set aside a large protected area, too. Sergei Ivanov, the former chief of staff to President Vladimir V. Putin who has been named the special adviser to the president on environmental issues,

announced expanded protection for a region known as Franz Josef Land, a remote Arctic region, according to National Geographic, of "rocky, glaciated islands" with "stunning biodiversity."

Enric Sala, a marine ecologist who is an explorer in residence for National Geographic, said, "This historical national park designation has shown Russia's commitment to the conservation of the Arctic environment, and sent a powerful signal to the other Arctic nations."

Is this an isolated example? Perhaps, but Mr. Ivanov, appointed after Mr. Putin announced that 2017 would be the Year of Ecology, has also pledged to clean up waste in and around Lake Baikal, a Unesco World Heritage site that's considered the deepest and oldest lake in the world. Mr. Ivanov's list of future actions include protecting rare species and ecosystems, and ensuring the preservation of the Arctic and other regions.

By joining with the 25 other members of the Antarctic commission, Russian has the chance to usher in its Year of Ecology and make a bold demonstration of its commitment to the global cooperation and conservation by protecting a region that a Russian discovered.

Doing so would not only save fish, penguins, whales and seabirds, it would confirm the environmental aspirations of Russia and make the ocean a healthier, more resilient place.

(José María Figueres was the president of Costa Rica from 1994 to 1998 and is a former co-chairman of the Global Ocean Commission)

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http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/14/opinion/russia-is-vital-to-protecting-antarctic-ross-sea.html?emc=eta1&_r=0)

An Afterword on the IWC Meeting

By Sidney Holt, D. Sc.

I am not so pessimistic about the IWC as was Paul Spong in his post-meeting blog. It was of course shameful that the South American – African proposal to declare the South Atlantic as a sanctuary was again not accepted – but at least it got a substantial majority. As did also all the Resolutions that mattered. (That on food security was an obvious whalers' gimmick, and I was amazed to hear Japan promoting, still, this discredited nonsense about whales eating all 'our' fish!)

For me the most important move is Paul Gouin's idea for a decision to ban commercial whaling permanently on ethical grounds. I was delighted to hear that this has quiet support from a few Governments.

When I was on the delegation of the Republic of Seychelles, in 1981-82, preparing our project to secure a 'moratorium' on commercial whaling, for an indefinite duration, we knew that some delegations would support it on grounds of scientific uncertainty, but others simply wanted commercial whaling to end. The latter number is now, I think, greater. And the arguments for it are much stronger.

First, it is clear that some cetaceans – perhaps all – are self-aware animals as are at least some birds, and maybe even some fishes, as recent reports on the manta ray indicate. Of course, self-awareness is not decisive – humans kill each other, don't they? But the research behind Chile's resolution is very powerful and persuasive: an abundance of whales is an immense contributor to the vertical and lateral mixing of essential nutrients such as nitrogen and iron in the ocean.

At the times of the FAO-UNEP

scientific conference on marine mammals, in Bergen in 1976, I was looking at the weights of whales caught, historically, world-wide but especially in the Southern hemisphere, using the unique data accumulated by Christine Lockyer. The IWC had discouraged the Committee of Three independent scientists – of which I was one – from looking at whale abundances and catches in any terms other than numbers. The results of our study of catches in weight were shocking. The industry was removing one to two million tons of whale biomass a year from the ocean, much more than any catches of major groups of fishes, with the exception of the anchovy in the Southwestern Pacific. It was inconceivable that this would not have substantial effect on ocean bioproductivity.

Now we know more and realize that it is not – or not only – the removal of quantity that matters, but also the role of whales in moving critical elements and stirring up the ocean. This should be more than sufficient to bring about the end of commercial whaling, if science and logic are heeded. But, I have to say, it is hard to envisage the authorities of Japan to take notice of real science and simple logic.

It was with surprise that I saw my old friend and Scientific Committee opponent, Dr. Seiji Ohsumi, back on the job. He's nearly 86, nearly as old as me. Seiji was one of the authors of papers published by the Institute for Cetacean Research (ICR) – which he commanded – and even, to its shame, by FAO, about the huge quantities of 'our' fish that whales consumed. It was sort of quoted in the discussion of food security. The ICR scientists calculated from the results of metabolism research how much a minke whale needs to eat to

live, grow and maybe reproduce. But, they noted, half the weight of a euphausiid is indigestible chitin exoskeleton. So they doubled the total food quantity they had calculated. But they had forgotten – or perhaps never knew, though it had to be known to biologists for decades – that the front end of a minke stomach contains microbes that digest chitin! Just like ruminant cattle microbes digesting cellulose, and the 200 microbe species in our guts that digest whatever nasties reach our colons. The residues are in the whale poo that eager scientists are now collecting and analyzing.

I would end pessimistic – if it were not for the fact of so many people – some of them rich – who are encouraging and aiding Sea Shepherd to harass the whales year after year in the Antarctic. It is also disgraceful that the IWC allows the Japanese delegation every year to attack Sea Shepherd using lies and modified videos without their target being given the opportunity to defend themselves. That is not the fault of the whaling countries; it is the fault of the timid so called 'like-minded' country delegations.

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THANK YOU!