

Eco

International Whaling Commission Annual Meeting

In this issue:

- Catch Word is Bycatch
- Out of Whales
- Food for Thought
- Time to Turn the Page

Previous issues:

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

Japan and Client Countries Defeat South Atlantic Sanctuary

We can't say anyone was surprised, as once again the government of Japan rolled out a number of client countries to vote against establishment of the South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary, which has been under discussion by the IWC since 1998.



With 88 current IWC member countries, a vote for a Sanctuary requires $\frac{3}{4}$ of the countries present to vote "YES." But Japan mustered a total of 24 countries to vote a strong "NO", none of which border on the proposed Sanctuary and most without a history of whaling. 38 countries voted for the Sanctuary, well short of 75 percent.

Even more disgusting, several of the client governments of Japan opposed and blocked a consensus on a resolution for the IWC to support efforts to protect the endangered

vaquita porpoise. The vaquita exists only in Mexico's Sea of Cortez, and Mexico itself is a leading partner in efforts to protect the diminutive porpoise, believed to number as few as 59 animals. The resolution is expected to come up again later in the week.

In other words, the whaling countries continue to conspire to block any action at the IWC to protect whales and dolphins.

Despite this setback, the government of Brazil has offered to host the IWC meeting in 2018.

Japan Recruits Through Cash Bribes, Flights and Prostitutes

On Sunday, June 13th, 2010, the *Sunday Times* revealed an undercover investigation into bribery by the Japan Fisheries Agency of IWC delegates. Reporters posed as wealthy Western conservationists who offered to pay off delegates for voting for whales. Reportedly, delegations that entered the bribery negotiations included St. Kitts and Nevis, the Marshall Islands, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Grenada, and Kiribati. During the sessions, the reporters gathered information on Japan's bribery of these governments for their votes at the IWC.

According to the *Times* story: The top fisheries official for Guinea said Japan usually gave his minister a "minimum" of \$1,000 a day spending money in cash during the IWC and other fisheries meetings.

A senior fisheries official for the Marshall Islands said: "We

support Japan because of what they give us."

A Kiribati fisheries official said his country's vote was determined by the "benefit" it received in aid.

The IWC commissioner for Tanzania said "good girls" were made available at the hotels for ministers and senior fisheries civil servants during all-expenses-paid trips to Japan.

The *Times* editorial concludes: "Japan's bribes...mean that a decision of enormous importance for the planet looks like being nodded through. A vote to lift the ban will in effect have been bought...The fate of the remarkable creatures should not be decided by brown envelopes and prostitutes."

The government of Japan has made some pathetic claims that they do not pay off countries to join them in voting down resolutions to protect whales, such as Tuesday's vote against establishment of the South

Atlantic Whale Sanctuary. But in fact, Japan's representatives have repeatedly slipped up and admitted to international bribery:

The former vice minister of Japan's Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries Agency, Hiroaki Kameya, said in June, 1999 that it was "essential to increase the number of nations supportive to Japan...[and therefore] necessary to couple effectively overseas development assistance and the promotion of the IWC membership."

In an interview *Los Angeles Times* in 1997, the then IWC Commissioner for St. Vincent, Stuart Nanton, acknowledged that aid played a role in his country's politics and said that it was 'only logical' that his country would support Japan as they had given aid. ['Support of Whaling is No Fluke', *LA Times* 12/19/97]

In 1999 another IWC delegation

(Continued on page two)

(Continued Japan Recruits Through Cash Bribes...from front page)

Chair and representative of the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Agency, Hideki Moronuki, was quoted as saying that Japan hoped to coax developing nations to join the IWC in exchange for financial assistance. Aid would be offered in hoped of balancing the votes in Japan's favor at the IWC. ['Japan Urges Support for Whaling', Associated Press 6/13/99]

During the 53rd IWC meeting in 2001, CNN reported a statement made by the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Mr. Lester Bird (and confirmed in an interview with the Caribbean News Agency) saying, "Quite

frankly I make no bones about it...if we are able to support the Japanese and quid pro quo is that they are going to give us some assistance, I am not going to be a hypocrite; that is part of why we do so."

On September 3, 2003, Associated Press reported that the former Agriculture Minister in Grenada, Michael Baptiste, had been arrested the day before and charged with stealing a donation to the Government of Grenada that had been wired to his private bank account by an individual in the United States. Grenadian media reported that Baptiste had said persons or agents who are looking for Governments who support their view at the IWC sent the money.

In 2004, a senior minister in Dominica, when questioned about whether Japanese interests had paid

for his country's annual IWC dues states: "Put it like this, we make no allocation for it in our national budget." ['Save the Whales? Not if Japan's Bribes Pay Off', *Observer* 5/13/04]

The 2004 Global Corruption Report from Transparency International, which had a special focus in political corruption, included an article entitled "Vote Buying and the International Whaling Commission".
https://www.transparency.org/news/pressrelease/20060611_vote_trading_threatens_the_integrity_of_the_international_whaling

As you can see, Japan's bribery of officials and countries to promote whaling at the IWC is an old, sad story still very much with us.

Saving the Whales, One Spreadsheet at a Time

World Animal Protection International (WAP) notes that it is gratifying to see the IWC is broadening its focus from commercial hunting to the many pressing threats facing whales. Not a moment too soon WAP seeks an end to whaling, including 'scientific whaling', but as is evidence at the 66th meeting of the IWC, there are still too many pro-whaling voices.

Every year, 640,000 tonnes of lost and discarded fishing gear is added to the oceans, maiming or killing thousands of whales, dolphins and other marine animals. Whales starve to death after getting entangled or swallowing this ghost' fishing gear. We believe the first step towards a global, co-ordinated effort on ghost gear and entanglements is consistent data on such instances wherever they occur, available to anyone who wants it.

Currently, data on ghost gear is piecemeal and there is no one-stop-shop housing it. In September 2015, World Animal Protection founded the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) to improve the health of marine ecosystems, protect marine animals and safeguard human health and livelihoods. Its members come from the fishing industry, seafood retailers, academia, governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations.

We encourage the IWC to put its leadership role to work by going to its members for this data and sharing it with the GGGI portal.

WAP's Sea Change campaign, working to reduce suffering caused by 'ghost gear':

<https://www.worldanimalprotection.org/our-work/animals-wild/sea-change>



Escalating Whale Meat Trade – A Problem for CITES, IWC and the EU

Thirty years ago the IWC implemented the commercial whaling moratorium, and in support of this milestone in whale conservation, the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) instituted a ban on commercial trade in whale products. These two Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in essence synced their competences in favor of whales, banning both hunting and trading. Since then, a series of resolutions and decisions have been passed by both MEAs, with CITES supporting the IWC moratorium by maintain the great whales on Appendix 1, which bans international trade.

However, Iceland, Norway and Japan have shown that they do not care about these decisions and continue to undermine the CITES trade ban by holding reservations against the CITES whale listings. In recent years, Norway and Iceland have exported an increasing amount of whale products to Japan. The volume shipped has grown substantially; while Norway's exports of whale products within the period 2002-2013 amounted to a total of 55 metric tons (mt), almost

exclusively to the Faroe Islands, these exports grew to 84 mt in 2014, almost 96 mt in 2015, and more than 194 mt to date in 2016. The reason for the growth is Norway's renewed whale meat trade with Japan, and shockingly, a number of these shipments transited EU ports en route to Japan.

Two major companies involved in exporting Norway's whale meat and blubber are Lofothval, partially owned by Icelandic whaling mogul Kristjan Loftsson, and Myklebust Hvalprodukter. The latter has had inspectors from Japan's Kyodo Senpaku (the company tied to Japan's whaling in the Southern Ocean) on board its whaling vessel since 2013. Information supplied by Myklebust in its request for a CITES export permit indicated that this represents the meat from 13 minke whales caught by three vessels. In essence, Myklebust is whaling in large part for the Japanese market, due to the fact that domestic demand in Norway has not grown.

For the second in a row, Kristjan Loftsson has used the same private charter vessel to send whale meat to Japan via the Northern Sea Route. The *Winter Bay* left Iceland in late July 2016 with more than 1500 mt of products from endangered fin whales. Although Hvalur did not hunt in

2016, there were substantial amounts of whale products in storage. Minke whaling, which did not take place in 2016, is mostly for the domestic market, although Iceland did export minke whale meat to Latvia in 2010. This was a violation of CITES as Latvia does not hold a reservation to the listing of whales on Appendix 1. The *Winter Bay* is based in an EU member state that is bound to the strict protection levels for large whales within the EU.

This trade is a slap in the face for both the IWC and CITES. The UN World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) drew attention to this issue in a document presented to the 2013 CITES meeting, and CITES has issued several notifications reminding Parties that no export or import permit should be issued for any whale species protected from commercial whaling by the international community. Unfortunately, the chance for an IWC Resolution on commercial whaling and related trade has been repeatedly missed. Again, this is a special shame for the EU, which missed the chance to react against commercial whaling in European waters by proposing such a resolution. Sadly, the IWC has remained silent on its key mandate, as the last such resolution on commercial whaling passed in 2001.

Bycatch is the Biggest Threat

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is reminding the IWC that the entanglement of whales and dolphins in fishing gear is the biggest killing engine in the oceans today. "With hundreds of thousands of whales and dolphins dying every year after being accidentally entangled in fishing gear, the world must take concrete

steps during the IWC meeting...in Slovenia to mitigate that serious threats posed by bycatch."

The bycatch by fisheries around the world kills at least 300,000 cetaceans annually, and threatens the survival of key species, such as the endangered vaquita of Mexico and the Maui and Hector's dolphins of New Zealand. Already, fishing net

entanglements as well as habitat loss led to the extinction of the Yangtze River dolphins of China.

WWF and other groups are urging the IWC to take action. Read the story in full: http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/endangered_species/cetaceans/cetaceans/iwc/

The Real Poop on Whale Dung

Not to make too fine a line in decorum, a recent article in *New Scientist* points out the tremendous value in having live whales in the ocean to circulate nutrients at the surface. Much of the ocean's minerals and nutrients essential for life are tied up in the bottom, out of range of energy-giving sunlight and the floating plant. Whales, however, tend to do their toilet work in the upper reaches of the ocean near the

surface, where sunlight is plentiful and the food chain begins by microscopic plant species (the phytoplankton) sucking up the surrounding fertilizer.

The article states: "for the first time in the IWC's 70-year history, delegates attending from member countries will be invited to acknowledge growing evidence that whales don't decrease fish numbers – the primary excuse for continued

whaling by Japan, Norway and Iceland – and they actually have the opposite effect." The government of Chile is tabling this party-pooing (for whalers) resolution.

See full story at:
<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2109365-whales-dung-is-the-real-reason-we-need-to-stop-hunting-them/>

Time to Turn the Page

By Paul Spong, PhD

Country Joe McDonald once said "Save the Whales, Save the Earth". His slogan became a mantra of the Save the Whales movement that blossomed in the '70s. In 1982, when the IWC agreed to a moratorium on commercial whaling, many who had fought for it thought the game was over. Personally, I returned to my first passion, learning about orcas and educating people about them, believing this path would lead to an era in which the world would understand whales for the incredible creatures they are, and never again give a thought to considering them as mere objects to be "harvested". Not true.

The moratorium came into effect in 1986, by which time many hitherto whaling nations had completely abandoned killing whales. Rather they were becoming whale lovers, a trend that was manifested in the rapid growth of whale watching as an alternative to whale killing. The new economy provided jobs and income to more people than did the whaling industry, and besides, it was pleasurable work, a description I doubt was seldom if ever heard from whalers.

Post 1986, contrary to my belief, whaling did not end. Rather, having been all but vanquished, it began a slow climb towards a new goal: sustainable whaling. The premise behind this unsavory concept is that as long as a species does not go extinct there's no problem with killing that provides jobs and food for humans. So whaling meandered on, and the IWC did not transform itself as I had thought possible into an organization focused on living rather than dead whales. This fact and failure got me increasingly worried. By 1997 I'd become so nervous about what had happened during the previous 15 years that I returned to the fray.

The meeting was in Monaco. The proceedings had started by the time I got there. I walked in at the back of the hall quietly, and seeing Sidney Holt sitting against a wall off to one side went over to greet him. It was a great relief to find Sidney still involved. He quickly confirmed that I was right to worry about what was happening. In a nutshell, the IWC was descending into a stalemate. Progress like the 1994 creation for the Southern Ocean Sanctuary for whales no longer seemed achievable. The explanation was simple. Japan was acquiring new allies. After the meeting ended, I had a conversation

with a Japanese delegate in a dockside bar who told me "we learned from you". Indeed they had.

In the years that followed, new country after country joined, mutely or loudly following Japan's lead. The outcome of meetings became predictable. Tales of corruption abounded. Suitcases of cash and aid for votes became real or imagined, evidence of Japan's single-minded intent to "win" this battle. Profound distrust ruled, and despite reorganization and attempts at transparency, that's pretty much where we are now. Stuck.

There are two losers in all of this: First, the whales themselves: Second, the missed opportunity for Japan and the world to resolve this particular issue and by doing so demonstrate that total involvement from everyone on key environmental issues is possible and vital to leaving our grandchildren and theirs a livable world.

The challenge we collectively face now is no less than: Save the Earth.

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