

ECO

International Whaling Commission Annual Meeting

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Makah Whaling: Persistence, Not Subsistence

Even while defending challenges in a U.S. Court regarding violations of the U.S. National Environmental Policy Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the U.S. is again attempting to circumvent IWC requirements for aboriginal subsistence quotas with regard to Makah whaling. As in 1997, the U.S.

is going to great lengths to ensure that the IWC will not reach a definitive ruling on whether the Makah Tribe qualifies for the aboriginal subsistence exemption to the whaling moratorium. Instead, for the precise purpose of avoiding such a ruling, the US has again submitted a joint quota proposal with Russian

Chukotka natives, whose subsistence needs have already been recognized by the Commission.

In 2000, the IWC Secretariat stated: "While the IWC did not explicitly sanction the Makah hunt, neither did it explicitly refuse to accept the Makah hunt as an aboriginal subsistence whaling operation. The IWC received a report

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Give Them Sanctuary

Once again this year the conservation-minded countries of the IWC will try to establish new sanctuaries for whales in the South Pacific and South Atlantic. And once again the whalers and their puppets will stop it from happening. Despite support from many nations, Japan and Norway have managed to block proposals for new whale sanctuaries in both the South Pacific and the South Atlantic. By contrast, nations

in those waters overwhelmingly support the sanctuaries.

Mexico established the first protected whale sanctuary in 1972 in Laguna Ojo de Liebre in Baja, one of the major birthing lagoons of the gray whale. And the wider Caribbean was declared a whale sanctuary under the Cartagena Convention.

In 1979, the IWC established the Indian Ocean Whale Sanctuary, with the strong support of local countries, many not even members of the IWC.

The IWC established the

Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary in 1994. Despite the declared protection for the area's whales, Japan continues to take minke whales within the Sanctuary, serving up the whale meat in Japan, but calling the crime "scientific research."

For the fourth year in a row, Australia and New Zealand will ask the IWC's blessing on a sanctuary for whales in the South Pacific (SPS). A sanctuary would certainly be a well-deserved break for the blue whales,

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Iceland's Reservation Bid Gets Iced

In a dramatic opening session procedural battle, Iceland was decisively defeated in its latest effort to rejoin the IWC while holding out a new reservation against the moratorium on commercial whaling. As late as Sunday evening, both pro- and anti-whaling camps were predicting the vote would come down to one vote, either way. In fact, a majority 25-20 voted to uphold the Chair's ruling that the IWC decision from last year, fully debated and voted

on at the time, was still in force. Many countries endorsed Iceland rejoining the IWC, but expressed deep opposition to allowing Iceland to rejoin with a new (and, as ECO pointed out yesterday, frankly illegal) reservation to the whaling moratorium.

Norway, Japan, and even nonmember Iceland attempted repeatedly to interrupt the proceedings and question the legitimacy of Chairman Fernholm's

ruling. Mexico's commissioner, Andres Rozental, was particularly outspoken in support of the Chairman and avoiding procedural delay.

An angry Odd Gunnar Skagestad, Chair of Norway's pro-whaling delegation, claimed the vote was "a return to the law of the jungle." Japan's Masayuki Komatso attempted to interrupt the voting with a point of order, but was rebuked procedurally by U.S. Commissioner Rollie Schmitt.

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Japan's Whale Numbers Fraud

A new book reveals that Japanese whalers in the heyday of international commercial whaling provided false information to the IWC. The book, entitled "The Rise and Fall of Japan's Coastal Whaling," written by former whaler Isao Kondo, is an eye-witness account of fraudulent whaling practices off the coast of Japan in the 1950s, 60s and

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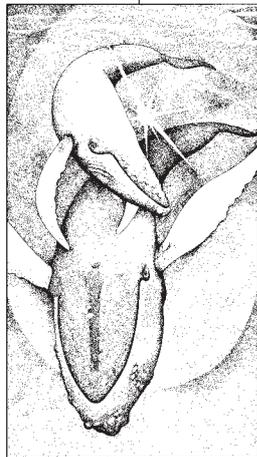
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70s. The sensational report documents that Japanese whalers were routinely catching more whales than reported and reporting larger sizes than actually caught.

For example, coastal catches of sperm whales were higher than reported, sometimes as much as two to three times more than the reported numbers.

The book also notes that Japanese Fisheries officials apparently did not approve of the misreporting, but took no action to stop it or report it to the IWC.



More than a decade after commercial whaling was halted by the IWC, it has only now been revealed that commercial whalers

have systematically lied to the IWC about important scientific data and compliance with IWC whaling restrictions designed to protect whale stocks. Japan's fleet, like that of the former Soviet Union, spent years cheating the IWC in defiance of the Convention. A return to commercial whaling

would once again facilitate such piracy on the high seas against the world's whales.

Makah, continued from page one of the 1999 kill by the Makah. There were no claims that an infraction has taken place. There is such a *de facto* acceptance of this hunt as falling within the IWC requirements for aboriginal subsistence whaling, although I might add that there is a degree of hesitation by some of the IWC members as reflected in the text attached. The onus of designating the Makah hunt an aboriginal subsistence hunt was ultimately left to the United States."

Unlike the Alaskan and Russian natives, after a 71-year hiatus from whaling, the Makah Tribe clearly has met neither the "uninterrupted tradition" nor the "nutritional need" requirements for aboriginal subsistence whaling. What is left is just a "cultural" need, similar to that expressed by Japan's coastal towns, whose requests for quotas have been flatly refused by the Commission. The United States may think that one out of three isn't bad, but cultural need alone does not qualify any group for aboriginal subsistence whaling as defined by the Commission.

The onus of designating the Makah hunt an aboriginal hunt resides solely with the IWC, not the United States. The question is this: Will the IWC review and act on the Makah's need statement or will it allow the Makah to conduct "cultural" whaling under the aboriginal subsistence exemption to the moratorium, thereby creating a precedent of "cultural subsistence?"

The IWC must separate out the question of Makah hunting from the Russian hunt and turn down the U.S. request for the Makah quota as a bad idea that never should have gotten off the ground.

Erratum

Yes, as amazing as it may seem, those cockroaches of the NGO community, the ECO staff, have made an error.

In yesterday's list of member countries, ECO left out Costa Rica and Senegal. Both are member countries, but nonvoting. We at ECO try to be perfect, and we regret the error. First time for everything ...

More Endangered Whales in Japan Markets

A new study has found meat from protected stocks of gray whales showing up in markets in Japan, being sold as “legal” whale meat for consumption.

Officially, only the minke, sperm and Byrde’s whales are hunted by Japan for so-called “research whaling.” Japan uses the research to justify selling whale meat from these species to the public. But DNA tests on whale meat bought in Japanese markets reveals that many other species are showing up, having been illegally poached on the high seas.

Humpback, fin, and sei whale

meat, all protected species, have been found for sale in Japanese markets over the past few years.

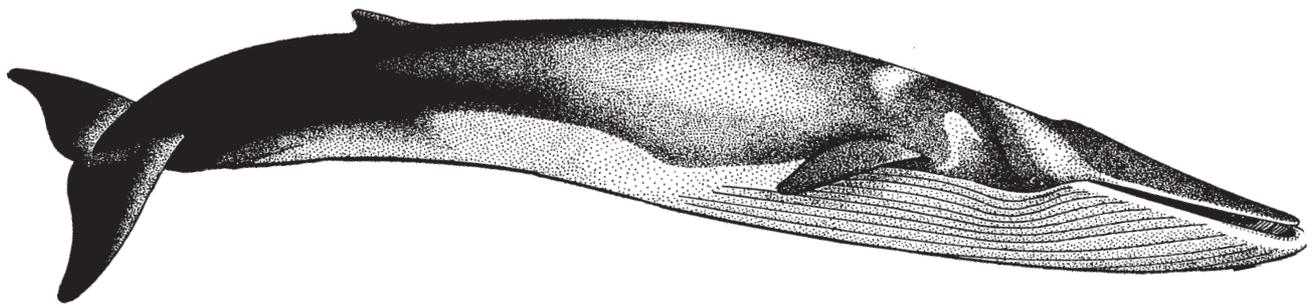
This year, for the first time, gray whale meat has been detected, most likely caught from the Western Pacific population, one of the most endangered cetacean stocks in the world. Biologists believe fewer than 100 whales survive in this stock, and several times in the recent past scientists have declared it completely extinct. The only other stock of gray whales in the Eastern Pacific is protected by the IWC and by the nations that encompass the stock’s



Expensive whale meat found this week in Shimonoseki market (¥28,000 kilo converts to ~U.S. \$225 kilo)

shallow ocean habitat.

Japan’s government continues to ignore the illegal killing of protected species of whales showing up in their own markets. 



Sanctuary, continued from page one humpbacks, fin whales, and other victims of the whaling industry’s excesses in the region throughout much of the 20th Century, when more than 1.5 million whales were slaughtered in the Southern Hemisphere. Uncontrolled whaling, aided by the outrageous under-reporting and manipulation of catch data that we’ve come to expect from the whaling industry, brought the Southern Ocean population of blue whales down to only 400-1100 animals, a tiny fraction of the pre-exploitation level. ECO assumes the whalers would like us to believe that further safeguards for these whales aren’t needed if we just thank the whales for letting us wipe them out and erect a nice statue in their memory on the blood-soaked beaches of Shimonoseki.

At prior IWC meetings Japan’s efforts to defeat the SPS proposal have been aided by the “*small island states of the Caribbean*” —or at least, those “*small island states of the Caribbean*” who receive substantial fisheries aid from Japan.

Never mind that the majority of *small island states of the South Pacific*, who understand the benefits in having *living* whales in their waters, have made it very clear that they want this sanctuary.

In response to the IWC’s failure to establish an SPS, the *small island states* of French Polynesia, Papua New Guinea, and the Cook Islands have declared their EEZs to be sanctuaries for whales. Others are in the works. In French Polynesia alone, this effort amounts to more than five million square miles, and in combination with the waters of the other *small*

island states, New Zealand and Australia, about 20 percent of the originally proposed sanctuary is now safe for whales.

This year, for the second year in a row, Brazil and Argentina are proposing a sanctuary for the South Atlantic, which, in combination with the SPS and the existing sanctuaries of the Indian and Southern Oceans, would make the entire Southern Hemisphere a protected marine area. The Government of Brazil has done an exemplary job of pulling this effort together. ECO congratulates them and Argentina, and wishes their efforts were going to be rewarded, but don’t count on it: the whalers and the “*small island states of the Caribbean*,” this time accompanied by the newest fisheries aid recipients from West Africa, will be working overtime to prevent it from happening. 

Japan's Shocking Ignorance Apparent in Fisheries Crisis

Japan's Minister of Fisheries revealed shocking ignorance about the growing fisheries crisis Monday when he blamed whales—not overfishing, pollution, climate change and other human impacts recognized by all responsible scientific agencies—as the cause of collapsing fish stocks worldwide.

In the opening address to the IWC meeting, Tsutomu Takebe said the “main purpose” of Japan's research whaling program is “to elucidate the role of cetaceans in the marine ecosystem: in other words, to find out how the consumption of marine living resources by whales affects commercial fisheries.”

“In the fifteen years since implementation of the moratorium on commercial whaling, many whale species have shown a rapid recovery and have increased significantly,” Minister Takebe claimed.

“As a result, it is estimated that as much as 250 to 440 million tons of living marine resources are consumed by cetaceans. This is equivalent to three to five times the annual harvest of marine capture fisheries in the world.”

But the IWC Scientific Committee and other scientists have found in recent years that there are apparently far fewer whales than had

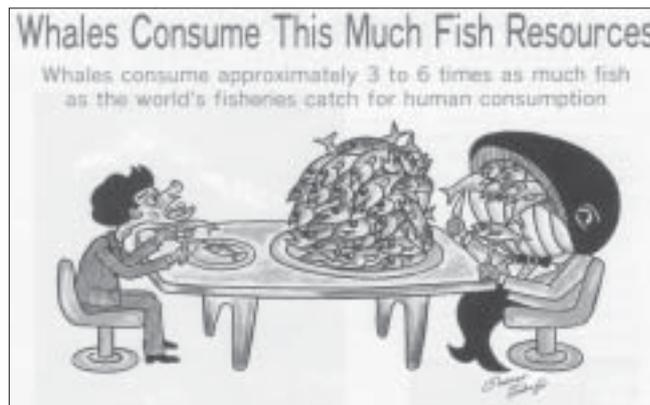
been estimated — particularly minke and sperm whales, the only species surviving in large numbers. Their populations may be less than half of what Japan has been claiming.

Japan's deceitful campaign to blame the whales was attacked and discredited by the U.S. and four other

fish populations are due to people, not whales. Fishing overcapacity and greed has caused a strip mining of the oceans.

“The April 28th *Japan Times* noted that even the 2001 edition of Japan's Fisheries White Paper acknowledges overfishing is a cause in the decline in fisheries resources.

“At the beginning of the last century hunters pursued whales to near extinction. Attention then turned to high seas fishing, which caused overharvests. And now, Japan seeks to blame whale stocks as a scapegoat and a diversion from the real problem—overfishing,” stated Schmitt.



Japanese propaganda: It's the whales that can't manage fisheries.

leading maritime nations at a Monday morning press conference. Stated U.S. Commissioner Rollie Schmitt:

“Let me spend a moment correcting a false assumption made by Japan. There is no scientific evidence that finds whales are causing the decline of fish stocks in our oceans.

“Every competent fisheries organization that has examined declining fish stocks, including the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization, has come to the same conclusion. Declining

“Let me make another key point about this issue,” he continued. “Many whales are not fish eaters—they eat plankton. Data from Japan's own research on whale stomach contents show the diet of a sei whale is 94 percent plankton. In fact, most large whales eat plankton and krill primarily.

“The Japanese public and others are too sophisticated to believe in the false and simple view that whales are responsible for the decline in fish stocks. Marine life in the complex ocean ecosystem faces real and large threats from overharvest and pollution—not whales.

“We ask Japan to stop spreading false claims. The real reason for the decline of fisheries is overfishing, not whales,” concluded the U.S. statement.

Japan's Ministry of Fishing is practicing a game of deceit and self-deception that is creating a shameful image for a proud nation.

It must end.

Iceland, continued from page one

Norwegian Commissioner Stefan Asmundsson told a later press conference that the vote represented a ‘sidestepping’ of IWC rules and procedures. But when asked by ECO as to whether and when Iceland would go whaling, Asmundsson admitted that Iceland had not made a decision as to whether or not to go

whaling, “although we have a policy of supporting going whaling sometime.”

For now, the IWC is to be congratulated for *not* being swayed by the false arguments of Iceland, that a country can quit a treaty organization, then rejoin and file a reservation to an agreement it had agreed to previously.