

Eco

International Whaling Commission Annual Meeting

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Whalers Harpoon Freedom of Speech

The Japanese government's whaling agency has launched a bitter attack on a New Zealand author whose new book recounts the tragedy of the great whales at the hand of man.

Marine biologist George Muller recently received an angry letter from the Institute of Cetacean Research, which operates the Japanese whaling fleet and sells whale meat.

Muller's novel, *Echoes in the Blue*, was attacked by the institute as

"disturbing propaganda" that was anti-Japanese and encouraged "further distrust and hatred towards Japan and its research programmes." The book has been named as a finalist for the 2007 Nautilus Book Award.

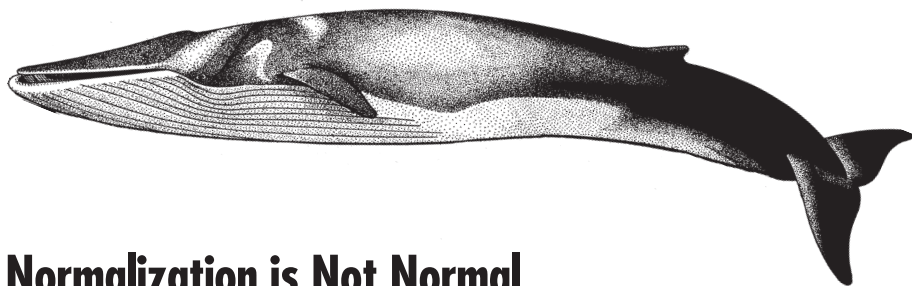
The book could cause a diplomatic incident between Japan and New Zealand, claimed the letter, which likened Muller to "al-Qaeda and its holy war" and said his "anti-Japanese writing may hinder the friendly relationship

between New Zealand and Japan that we have built over the years."

Muller defends his book as anti-whaling, not anti-Japan. He says Japan's "scientific research" whaling makes a mockery of science.

"I can only conclude that my book hit too close to the mark, and their attempt to discredit me and intimidate my right to free speech represents their desperation to suppress any criticism of their illegal whaling programme," states Muller.

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Normalization is Not Normal

In the name of "normalization" of the IWC (read: going back to unsustainable slaughter of all whales), the Japanese Fisheries Agency held a meeting in Tokyo beginning on February 13th, to discuss and put forward specific measures to "resume the function of the IWC as a resource management organization."

The government of Japan invited all parties from the IWC, but at least 26 conservation-minded countries refused the invitation. 35 other delegations attended, mostly pro-whaling. Many believe that the Japanese Fisheries Agency paid the bills for 21 pro-whaling nation delegations to attend.

The agenda for the meeting had three parts, according Japan's announcement, all a tired repeat of diatribes Japan's delegation has previously inflicted on IWC parties: "(1) Identification of Causes for the Malfunctioning of the IWC, (2) Exchange of Views and Ideas for Normalization of the IWC, and (3) Recommendations to the IWC."

Not surprisingly, the three-days of "normalization" meeting came up with a host of the normal recommendations Japan presents every year to the IWC: secret ballots, permission for commercial take of minke whales each year

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Vote in Balance

This year's meeting in Anchorage will renew the battle for control of the IWC.

Last year in St. Kitts, Japan and its whaling client nations obtained a bare majority. Seizing this advantage, the majority passed the notorious "St. Kitts Declaration" by one vote (33-32) calling for a renewal of commercial whaling, criticizing conservation-minded nations and NGOs, and generally displaying the kind of arrogant "my way or the highway" tone so prevalent in discussion of whaling issues by the Japan delegation. Reports indicate that Laos and other countries may have also joined at Japan's behest.

This year, a number of conservation-minded countries have joined the IWC, including Ecuador, Croatia, Solvenia, Cyprus, and Greece, while two long-term members, Peru and

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Scientists Speak Out

The scientific journal *Marine Policy* has had a lively debate over whale policy last year.

Mr. Joji Morishita, a member of the Japanese whaling delegation, started off by producing a helpful “matrix” to explain whaling policy in February 2006 (*Marine Policy* 30 - 2006). Of course, his “matrix” basically explains why he and the Japan Fisheries Agency think the world is biased against whaling and consists of largely a rambling diatribe against conservation-minded nations.

He repeats the Japan Fisheries Agency’s tired claims that the IWC has shifted away from “management” of the whale “resource” to

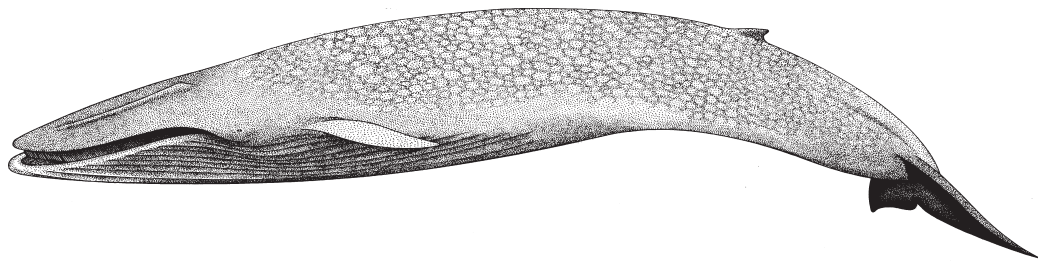
“conflicting values” because “the western developed world is generally ignorant about the current status of whale stocks.” He accuses western countries of using the whaling issue “as a front for fundraising and cost-free political campaigns.”

Morishita claims: “The contentious whaling dispute can be described as a scientific dispute over resource management, the collision between nations that regard whales as food and nations that see whales as special, political game played by politicians who like to be seen as environmentally conscious by opposing whaling, and economic interests of whaling industry

and fundraising anti-whaling organizations.”

Morishita claims that whales “... eat a large amount of commercially important fish,” contrary to fisheries managers and fisheries science. He further plays on primal fears of class and racism by charging the protection of whales stems from “... the egocentric views of the largely northern hemisphere developed world.”

He concludes: “The environment can’t be protected without realizing sustainable use of abundant whale resources.”



Lest you think his “scientific paper” is based on science, a number of scientists from the US, Australia, New Zealand, and Mexico responded in September 2006 (*Marine Policy* in press). Morishita’s paper, according to the scientists, “... confuses the issue through selective use of data, unsubstantiated facts, and the vilification of opposing perspectives.”

The issue, say the scientists, “... is not that some whales are not abundant, but that the whaling industry cannot be trusted to regulate itself or to honestly assess the status of potentially exploitable (whale) populations.”

As an example of the Japan

Fisheries Agency’s misuse of science, the scientists note Morishita’s claim that whales eat commercial fish. Many whales, the scientists note, do not eat fish at all. The primary predators of fish are not whales, but other fish. Furthermore, many whale stocks are at historically low levels. Morishita is guilty of the same generalization he claims opponents of whaling use.

The scientists note that Morishita’s paper is really just a re-statement of existing policy by the Japan Fisheries Agency, rather than an objective review of policy attitudes. “Throughout his

article,” the scientists note, “Morishita portrays as irrational or hostile any party

disagreeing with the GOJ’s (government of Japan’s) position. The term ‘anti-whaling’ appears no fewer than 33 times in the article...”

The scientists further note that “...powerful political pressure from within Japan comes from special interest groups, the fishing lobby, the Fisheries Agency and numerous politicians who all want to defend what they see as a right to secure unlimited access to global marine resources.”

The scientists end their critique by re-stating Morishita’s final words: “Japan’s fisheries policy can’t be protected without whaling.”

Vote in Balance, concluded from page one Costa Rica, have paid up their dues from past meetings, making them again eligible to vote.

However, as always, the real question will be which delegations actually show up in Anchorage to vote?

A majority vote could be used by Japan, Norway and other pro-whaling

countries to:

- require “secret” ballots on all voting, so the public will not know which nations actually vote for pro-whaling policies;
- kick out NGOs that member nations dislike (including—dare we say it?—ECO!);
- strip out any conservation actions

undertaken by the IWC, including removing the new Conservation Committee; and

- pass a request by majority vote for CITES to remove whale species from the protected list, to renew trade in whale products between the whaling nations.

See You in Court

A team of international lawyers has concluded that conservation-minded countries like Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom should stop the fruitless efforts at diplomacy with Japan and instead take Japan to the World Court for violations of the IWC rules.

Convened by the International Fund for Animal Welfare, the legal experts believe a strong case can be

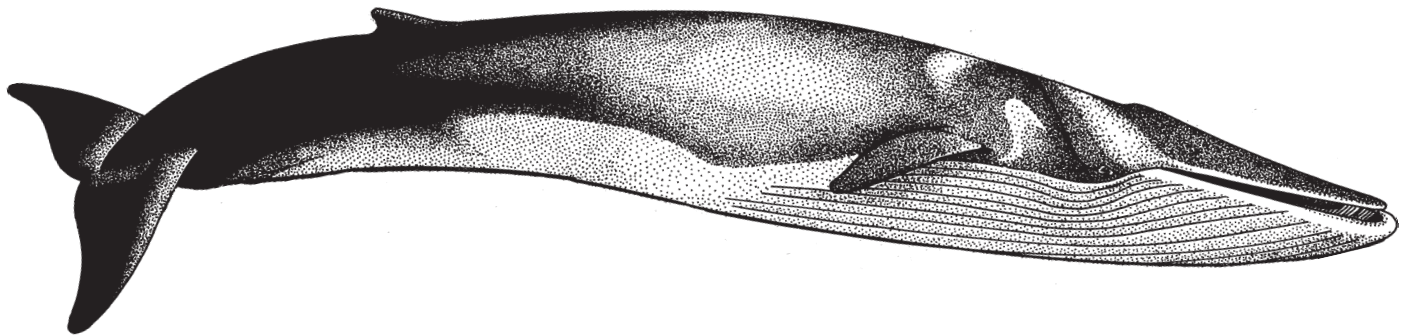
made against the actions of Japan and other whaling nations that ignore the international ban on commercial whaling, often using IWC loopholes (such as the science permitting process) to hide their illegal activities.

“Japan’s whaling program is illegal and will remain so until a government takes steps to challenge this unlawful activity,” stated Dr. Don Rothwell with the Australian National University.

To date, conservation-minded countries have resisted

recommendations that they seek a legal decision in the World Court over the whaling issue, arguing that such an effort might backfire against them.

But the efforts to control the whaling nations through the usual channels of diplomacy have utterly failed. In fact, Japan and Norway have increased their whaling activity, and are now targeting ever more rare stocks of whales, such as North Atlantic fin whales and southern hemisphere humpback whales.



National Day of Action to Protect Whales

Representatives of the Pacific Island and Maori communities, environmentalists and the whale-watching industry turned out to protest ongoing “scientific” whaling by Japan and urged the New Zealand and Australian governments to take legal action to protect humpback whales.

Demonstrations occurred in 20 coastal communities around Australia, as well as in New Zealand, Tonga and other locations in the Pacific.

The Japan Fisheries Agency’s research whaling scheme proposes to kill up to 50 southern ocean humpback whales, a species seriously depleted by

commercial whaling and now supporting a major whale-watching industry. Whale-watching trips now add almost \$120 million annually to the New Zealand economy and \$28 million annually to the South Pacific islands economy. Australia’s whale-watching industry charts at \$260 million a year.

South Korea Deliberately Netting Whales?

Reports of research conducted in South Korea strongly indicate that the country’s fishermen are deliberately netting minke whales in Korean waters and selling the meat from these “accidental” entanglements on the open market.

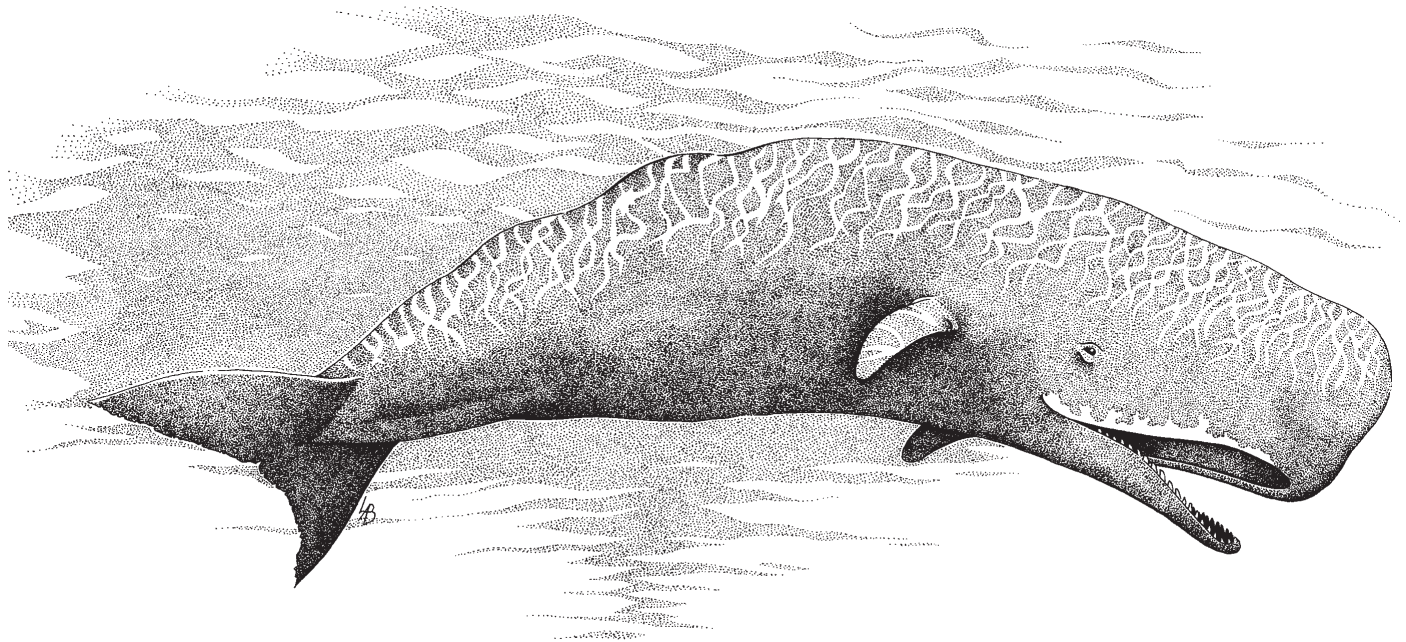
Researchers report that Koreans caught 80 percent more whales than are officially reported entangled. As many as

827 whales were caught by trawlers between 1999 and 2003, far more than the 458 officially reported.

The information comes from DNA sampling of minke whale meat sold in Korean stores, which can show how many individual whales were actually caught. A single minke whale can bring US \$100,000 on the Korean market.

Normalization, concluded from page one (claiming that allowance of subsistence take by aboriginal users indicates a “double-standard” by the IWC), and—what is really lacking at IWC meetings—more dialog among parties.

Sadly, the discussion did not end in February: The Japanese Fisheries Agency has placed a “report” on the Normalization Meeting on the IWC agenda. So even those parties who refused to trek to Tokyo in February get to sit through the harangue.



Tainted Sushi in US?

One of the largest seafood dealers in the US distributing sushi around the country is buying fish from Japan's Kyokuyo Company, a major seller of whale meat caught under Japan's illegal scientific permit scheme.

The Humane Society International, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), and Environmental Investigation Agency called on True World Foods Inc., based in New Jersey,

to pressure Kyokuyo to stop selling whale meat in Japan.

IFAW conducted a poll indicating that 69% of respondents in the US would agree to boycotting restaurants carrying products from a Japanese company engaged in selling whale meat. "A strong majority of Americans are saying they are willing to put down their chopsticks until their sushi company puts down their harpoons," said IFAW.

True World Foods delivers sushi to more than 6,000 restaurants in the US.

Tourism Boycott Hurts St. Lucia

Cyberdiver, an online SCUBA diving organization, reports that tourism in the Caribbean paradise of St. Lucia has dropped in the past year more than 7 percent. Why? Cyber Diver Society President Evan Allard called for an international boycott of St. Lucia due to the country's support for Japan's slaughter of whales and dolphins.

St. Lucia's Prime Minister John Compton claims that the decline in tourism is due to increased crime and inadequate marketing. So, rather than reversing course on whaling or cleaning up the crime problem, Compton proposes spending \$18.7 million in

promotion to lure tourists back.

Allard counters: "St. Lucia can spend millions on slick ads but until it reverses its pro-whaling policy, it will remain the defiant tourist-unfriendly outcast, the brutal and barbaric contract killer gunning down internationally respected conservationists and firing exploding harpoons into the backs of young whale mothers and their baby calves."

In 2003, animal rights and IWC activist Jane Tipson was gunned down in front of her home in St. Lucia; the contract-style murder has never been solved.

Here We Go Again

Japan, not for the first time, has again announced that their delegation may quit the IWC.

According to ECO computations, this promise to quit the IWC has been made repeatedly for 25 years or more.

No doubt this time the whalers *really* mean it?

Free Speech, concluded from page one

The Japanese government and its whalers have also been relentlessly attacking critics of their massive vote-buying operation at the IWC, piously denying that more than \$750 million in aid doled out to impoverished nations over the past 15 years had nothing to do with those nations joining the IWC and voting slavishly for Japan's pro-whaling demands.

Suppressing unpleasant facts is an unseemly trait of the Japanese government. To this day, the government assiduously denies that the Japanese Imperial Army plundered China, Korea and other Southeast Asian nations in the 1930s and 1940s. The government even challenges the enslavement of more than 200,000 women by its conquering army.