

# ECO

International Whaling Commission Annual Meeting

*In this issue ...*

- **Copernicus Redux**
- **Vanishing Vaquita**
- **Net Loss**
- **¿Donde USA?**

## The Grand Plan

After days—nay, months!—of discussion, the IWC commissioners revealed the consensus arrived with a flourish to the world.

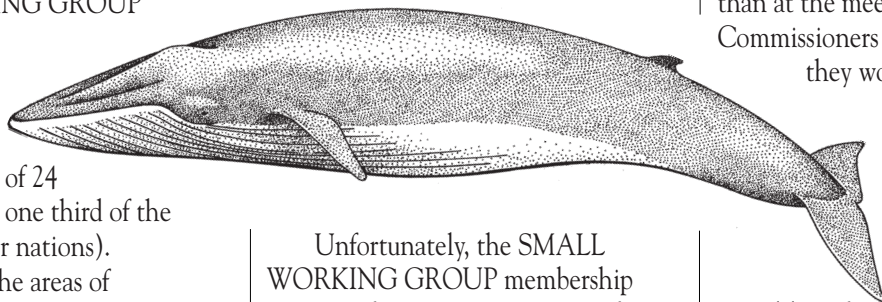
Drum roll please ...

The IWC will establish a SMALL WORKING GROUP to save the IWC.

So far, this SMALL WORKING GROUP consists of 24 members (almost one third of the IWC's 81 member nations).

Also so far, the areas of discussion for the SMALL WORKING GROUP includes 33 topics, including bycatch, civil society (the new watch-word at this year's IWC meeting, by the way), coastal whaling, scientific whaling, aboriginal whaling, sanctuaries, "ethics" (ethics?), the RMS, the RMP, sanctions, small cetaceans,

trade restrictions - in other words, all the contentious issues (and then some) from the past 60 years of the IWC will be discussed by the SMALL WORKING GROUP or SWG (pronounced "swig" as in what everyone does as soon as the IWC meeting is over).



Unfortunately, the SMALL WORKING GROUP membership consists of strong representation from all sides of IWC debates, so getting the consensed SMALL WORKING GROUP to consensus will probably take a while ...

A number of procedural proposals were also adopted by consensus, except that nations during the session objected to them. (The

Russian Federation, Korea, and China objected to a proposal, supposedly consensed on, to print all documents in Spanish and French, as well as English.)

Member countries agreed to try to circulate proposed resolutions sixty days in advance of meetings, rather than at the meetings. The Commissioners also consensed that

they would try to reach consensus on all issues, only resorting to voting if no consensus is found.

So, it appears that consensus is indeed possible, if everyone consenses to the consensus in a consensual manner. It is especially easy if we all agree to gain consensus in the future. Especially in a SMALL WORKING GROUP.

Meanwhile, the whaling industry is sharpening its harpoons for the next season of bloodletting.

## Free Speech for Half-an-Hour

With a great flourish, the IWC yesterday gave Non-governmental Organizations the immense new privilege of speaking their minds on any topic to the full Commission, for a total of 30 minutes and four speakers for each "side" of the whale debate.

This is supposed to be an experimental "step in the right direction" for more involvement of NGO's in the IWC's ponderous deliberations. Of course, for decades many other international fora have been providing opportunities for

NGO speakers, recognizing that NGO's often have important scientific information, investigative abilities, brilliant analyses, and don't put delegations to sleep, and therefore they welcome NGO speakers.

Dr. Mamadou Diallo, with WWF's West Africa Marine Ecoregion Programme, stated: "The argument that great whales are behind declining fish stocks is completely without scientific foundation. It is not the whales, but rather over-fishing and excess fishing capacity that are responsible for

diminishing supplies of fish in developing countries. Blaming whales serves to harm developing nations by distracting any debate on the real causes of the declines of their fisheries. We urge contracting governments to counter any unfounded claims that food security is threatened by whales-and to responsibly address over-fishing and excess fishing capacity."

Barbara Galletti representing many Latin American NGO's emphasized the importance of protecting whales: "For our region, the growing development of the

*Concluded on page two*

## Revolving Myths

The Russian Federation has discovered the history of the establishment of Non-Governmental Organizations. NGOs appeared, the Russian delegate happily explained to the Commission yesterday, when Copernicus was burned at the stake. Critics of research whaling are

attempting to “push Japan into the fire,” he exclaimed.

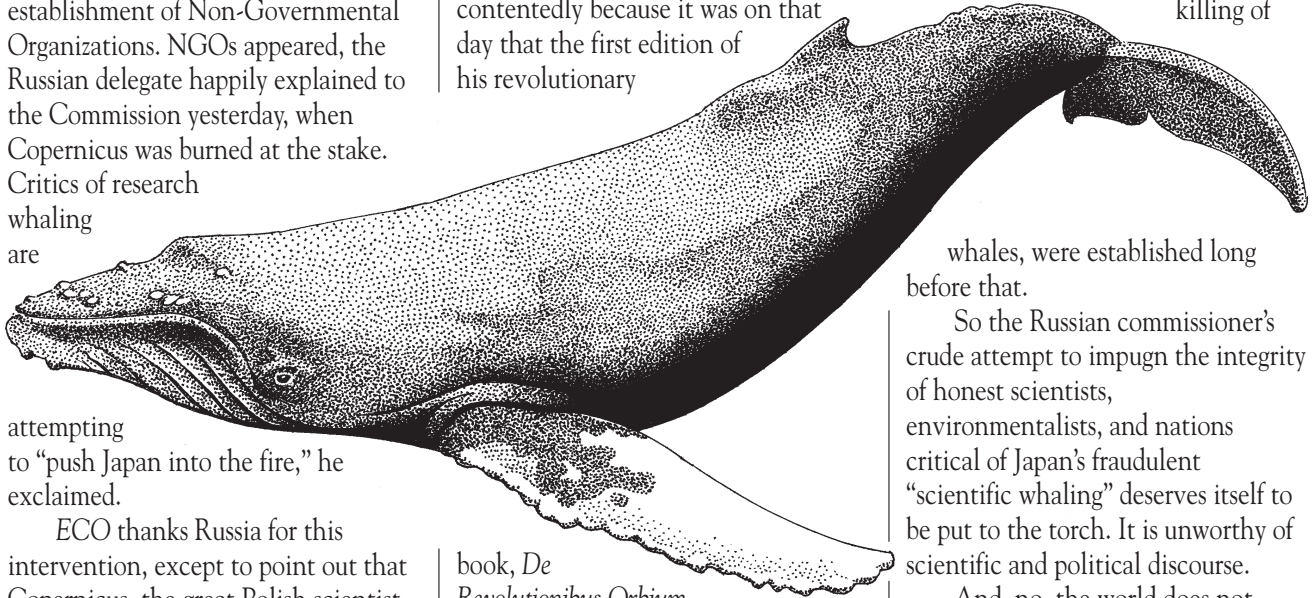
ECO thanks Russia for this intervention, except to point out that Copernicus, the great Polish scientist who proved that the planets revolve around the sun, in fact died of natural

causes at the ripe old age of 70. His family was at his side, not witch-burners imagined by the Russian commissioner. He reportedly died contentedly because it was on that day that the first edition of his revolutionary

book, *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* was presented to him. The Catholic Church did not condemn

his writings for another fifty years.

ECO further notes that brutal repressive governments, and coincidentally bloody killing of



whales, were established long before that.

So the Russian commissioner's crude attempt to impugn the integrity of honest scientists, environmentalists, and nations critical of Japan's fraudulent “scientific whaling” deserves itself to be put to the torch. It is unworthy of scientific and political discourse.

And, no, the world does not revolve around the IWC.

## Optimistic Future

According to the High North Alliance, those hearty defenders of Nordic bloodshed, “(a) day and (a) half of discussions on the Future of the International Whaling Commission should clearly cement in the minds of its members that the

organisation has no future ...

“In their effort to keep the IWC alive and resurrect the organisation from the sea of irrelevance, the members are attempting to put everyone's concerns into a ‘package deal’ that will include everything from commercial whaling and science through sanctuaries and small

cetaceans.

“This process will demonstrate the real future of the IWC - that it is well and truly dead. The real question now is: what organisation will be responsible for the future management and conservation of whale stocks?”

## ECO

ECO is published by Earth Island Institute's International Marine Mammal Project at the 60th meeting of the International Whaling Commission in Santiago, Chile, on behalf of environmental and animal welfare organizations around the globe.

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*Speech, Concluded from page one* industry of responsible and high quality whale watching is of great importance because of its social, cultural, environmental, educational and economic benefits. Even more, these benefits contribute directly to the qualitative and sustainable development of our coastal communities, for which the non lethal use and conservation of cetaceans represents the legitimate demands of Latin American citizens.”

Wakao Hanaoka of Greenpeace Japan spoke of the future: “All parties to this Convention need to take

action this week towards turning that tide, so that in 2068, if perhaps one of our children is a Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission, it will be possible for him or her to address this body saying:

“This Commission will be known to history as a body which rose to the occasion and became an instrument of conservation which brought back whale species from the brink of extinction and led the way for the protection of marine biodiversity so that we can be proud of the clean, healthy and vital oceans that we have today.”

## The Biggest Slaughter Continues

Environmentalists continue to call for a stop to Japan's Dall's porpoise hunt—the biggest whale kill in the world. This hunt is the largest directed kill of any cetacean species and has been for over a quarter of a century. Since records began in the 1960s, more than half a million Dall's porpoises have been killed in Japan's coastal waters, at least 350,000 of these during the IWC's moratorium on commercial whaling. That's an average of two porpoises an hour throughout the entire 22 years of the moratorium!

According to the Environmental Investigation Agency and Campaign Whale, a further 16,875 animals will be killed this year with the meat sold for human consumption despite the fact it is heavily polluted.

EIA's Director Jennifer Lonsdale

says, "Japan claims that it supports the sustainable management of whales based on science. However, its appalling mismanagement of the Dall's hunt belies this claim."

The IWC Scientific Committee has repeatedly expressed concerns that Japan's porpoise slaughter is not sustainable and called for new population assessments. This year's report recommends that catches be reduced to sustainable levels as soon as possible. Many nations made interventions yesterday expressing concerns for the Dall's porpoise in Japanese waters.

The Scientific Committee has expressed similar concerns twelve times in the last sixteen years with the Commission passing three resolutions on the issue, the most recent in 2001, which called on Japan

to "halt the directed takes of Dall's porpoises until a full assessment by the Scientific Committee has been carried out." Japan has completely ignored these calls for restraint.

However, there is hope with Japan Fisheries Agency scientists suggesting that Japan may implement a new management model known as Potential Biological Removal (PBR) that could drastically cut quotas. The PBR strategy will only work with scientifically sound population estimates.

"The Dall's porpoise hunt is totally unsustainable, but we hope that the recommendations of the Scientific Committee and the repeated concerns of the Commission may finally be heeded by Japan," says Campaign Whale Director Andy Ottaway. "Certainly urgent action is needed before Dall's porpoises are wiped out in Japanese waters."

## Coming to a Market Near You

*Oh Greenland is a dreadful place;  
It's a land that's never green,  
Where there's ice and snow  
and the whale fishes blow,  
And the sun is seldom seen,  
'way boys, the sun is seldom seen.  
—The Ballad of the Greenland Whalers*

Don't look now, but aboriginal subsistence has gone mainstream in Greenland. Contrary to IWC regulations, whale meat caught for ostensibly local, shared consumption for Greenland's native food needs is in fact being sold in stores. The World Society for the Protection of Animals has documented that the whale meat is widely available in supermarkets throughout Greenland.

This is *not* subsistence whaling—it is *commercial* whaling. Duh!

There are a number of problems with the Greenland harvest of whales and other marine mammals. Many of the populations targeted are severely

reduced and need protection. Toxic contamination of whale meat is a major issue. Global warming is reducing whale, dolphin, and seal habitat and endangers hunters on the thin ice.

During the IWC Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling Sub-committee meeting on June 18th, several nations, in response to the WSPA research, asked Denmark to prepare a report on the disposition of whale meat caught in Greenland ostensibly for subsistence, but surprisingly Denmark refused.

Denmark went on to claim the sale of whale meat was important to the hunters in order for them to have cash to buy whale weaponry. But WSPA notes that, according to their review, only 22 percent of the whale meat sale price goes to the Greenland whalers. The retail stores and the distributor, ironically named Arctic Green Food, consume the rest.

Clearly, allowing Greenland to continue the fraud of aboriginal whaling when in fact the whale meat is simply bought and sold in the best commercial tradition is an insult to the intelligence of the member nations of the IWC.

This shame did not keep the government of Denmark from proposing an increase in humpback whale quotas for the hunters. Reportedly, when the EU countries at a meeting unanimously agreed to oppose the Denmark proposal, Denmark huffily walked out of the meeting.

But Denmark also is expected to withdraw their proposal.

## Meet the Mermaid

ECO is not sure that the IWC has competence over mermaids, but the Surfers for Cetaceans from Australia will be poolside today at 12:30 at the Sheraton, with their very own mermaid. *Swimsuits optional.*



## Japan's Poisoned Coastal Dolphin Meat

Japan suffered the most extreme consequence of ocean pollution in the 1950s when fishermen in the small village of Minamata ate fish laced with mercury that was dumped into the bay from a factory.

Today, alarmed health officials are discovering that mercury levels found in dolphins and small whales caught in Japan's coastal waters are higher than the levels in the fish at Minamata Bay. Some of this dolphin meat is even showing up on school

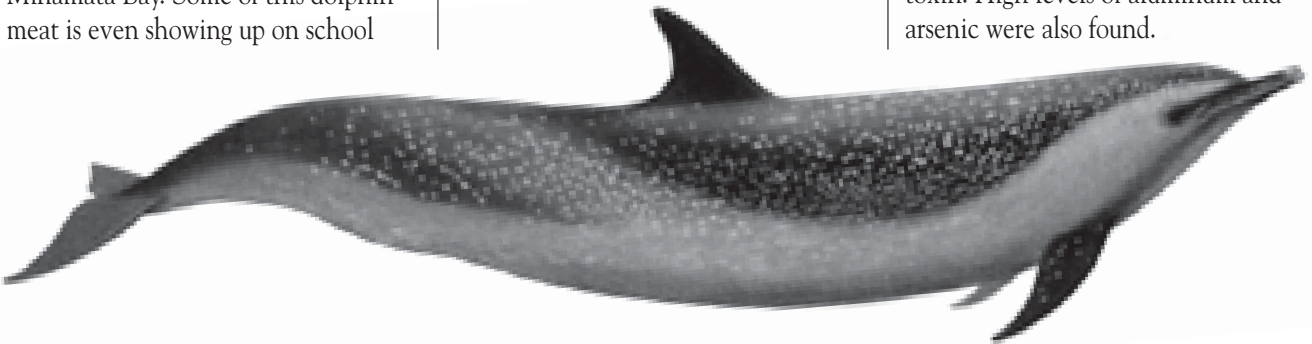
lunch menus, exposing children, the most vulnerable age group to mercury poisoning, to the deadly toxins.

Blue Voice reports at this IWC meeting that mercury levels found in people in the town of Taiji who eat dolphin meat were extremely high. The US Environmental Protection Agency recommends mercury levels no higher than 1.0 ppm. One man tested in Taiji revealed a mercury

level of 18.9 ppm—a doctor recommended that he be immediately hospitalized.

Three people in the Blue Voice study claimed they gave up eating dolphin meat a year or more before being tested. Yet, they still had high mercury levels ranging from 7.2 to 7.9 ppm.

High levels of heavy metals were also detected. The man with the highest mercury levels also had 5.6 ppm levels of lead, a serious neurotoxin. High levels of aluminum and arsenic were also found.



## ¿Donde esta Estados Unidos?

At Monday's ceremony with the Chilean Government announcing a ban on whaling and a nation-wide whale sanctuary, dozens of dignitaries from around the world attended, including several environment ministers and ambassadors representing their countries.

But where was a representative of

the United States standing alongside Chilean President Michelle Bachelet? Not an American official to be seen. Nobody from the U.S. delegation to the IWC. No U.S. ambassador or diplomat.

Nadie!

The most popular Republican in the U.S., California Gov. Arnold

Schwarzenegger, spent a whole day with President Bachelet recently to cement relations. But the Bush Administration, decidedly unpopular across the U.S. and around the world, reinforced its pathetic image by ignoring the anti-whaling celebration held amid the ruins of a Japanese whaling station near Valparaiso.

## Adios, Vaquita

In spite of two decades of promises by the Mexican government to take actions to save the critically endangered vaquita porpoise from extinction, the IWC Scientific Committee reported Wednesday that the beautiful little cetacean in the Gulf of California could vanish within 5 years.

It is a tragic tale of governmental malfeasance. In 1997 a study estimated that 567 vaquitas inhabited the waters around the delta of the

Colorado River. A study in 2007 estimated the number had fallen to just 119. Illegal gillnet fishing in Mexico's Sea of Cortez is relentlessly killing off the last of the porpoises.

The Scientific Committee warned that while "the government of Mexico is taking measures to eliminate the fishery gear that is drowning vaquitas, it is greatly concerned that the proposed phase-out period of 'within three years' may not be rapid enough to prevent extinction. Certainly if this schedule was to slip, then extinction is

probable in a short time."

(It doesn't help the vaquita's dire situation that Mexico's infamous drug cartels are operating openly throughout the northern Gulf of California, trafficking boatloads of cocaine toward the U.S. border.)

So Mexico might want to take to heart the desperate appeal of the Scientific Committee: "It strongly recommends that, if extinction is to be avoided, all gillnets should be removed from the upper Gulf of California immediately."