

The 43rd meeting of the International Whaling Commission, Reykjavik, Iceland, 27–31 May 1991

The most important news to report from the IWC meeting this year is that the moratorium on commercial whaling, in place since 1986, remains in force. The key underlying question, however, is how long the creaking parts of the outdated IWC machine can be held together.

The IWC is the only international body regulating whales world-wide. This means that in order to protect whales one has to work through the IWC. But, set up by whalers for whalers in 1946, the IWC is based on the fundamental premise that commercial whaling is acceptable.

This fact is at the root of the dilemma now facing the conservation-minded countries that currently dominate the IWC. In order to stop the slaughter of whales, over which the IWC presided throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, concerned countries joined the Commission throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

However, the moratorium they worked for was won at the expense of a bargain forced on the conservation majority both by the whaling countries and by the very nature of the IWC. That bargain was that there would be a comprehensive assessment of stocks during the moratorium. It came to be recognized that part of that assessment had to be the development of a revised management procedure, which would provide for rational, controlled exploitation—guaranteeing (as far as humanly possible) that whale populations would not be depleted, and that depleted populations would be protected. The bargain was necessary in order to prevent the remaining whaling countries (Iceland, Norway and Japan) leaving the IWC and continuing to whale beyond direct international control.

Thus, the conservation-minded countries came to be locked into negotiating a revised management procedure for commercial whaling, to resume on a rational basis. Indeed, a small group of dedicated conservationist scientists within the IWC's Scientific Committee has been instrumental in the development of probably the most sophisticated management

model ever produced in relation to the exploitation of any natural resource.

However, the debate has now moved on from the prevention of extinctions to permanent protection from exploitation. Today most people do not wish to see any commercial whaling ever again, even if it could be rationally controlled.

In Reykjavik the IWC endorsed the recommendation of the IWC's Scientific Committee on a revised management procedure for whaling, but decided that further work was required on the selected procedure and it directed the Committee to develop it to give maximum safety for whales.

Thus the possibility of a resumption of commercial whaling was averted for another year, but with every year that goes by the threat of a resumption, sanctioned by the IWC, grows stronger. While most stocks of great whales have been depleted to a fraction of their original size by whaling, minke whales in the Southern Ocean have not yet been subjected to massive commercial exploitation. This is where Japan has its sights.

However, most people are concerned not so much with whether or not the Southern Ocean's populations of minke whales could be exploited sustainably, but with whether exploitation is really necessary at all. Whales are now commercially hunted exclusively for their meat, and the best market place in the world is Japan where a single minke whale is worth \$40,000 wholesale. It is a luxury meat for a luxury market. It can be argued that commercial whaling is not only inhumane but also unnecessary.

With its presumption in favour of whaling, the IWC seems to be on a collision course with the growing conservation ethos that exploitation, not just of whales but of all natural resources, should be allowed only if it is really necessary because of overriding human needs or if there are definite conservation benefits. Commercial whaling clearly fails both criteria.

The question now is whether the majority of countries in the IWC will ever be willing to sanction the resumption of commercial whaling in accordance with the revised management procedure still under development. The

conservation-minded countries have a lot of thinking to do over the next year or two: is it better for the whales to reject quotas for the whalers, or to allow them in order to keep whaling under direct international control?

One response to their predicament is to raise again the question of the humaneness of whaling. In Reykjavik the UK succeeded in gaining the agreement of the IWC to a workshop on whale-killing methods, which will take place in the UK next year prior to the 1992 IWC meeting due to take place in Glasgow. It remains to be seen how much of a bargaining chip the humane issue will become.

Small cetaceans

The phenomenal growth of drift-net fishing over the last 10 years or so has massively increased threats to small cetaceans, which are often trapped along with target species and also increasingly subject to direct catches, especially in Peruvian and Sri Lankan waters.

Although a subgroup of the IWC's Scientific Committee has for many years been reviewing the position of small cetaceans, the IWC has not accepted that it has competence to regulate them in practice. Some IWC member states are reluctant to consider small cetaceans within the context of the IWC because they do not like the idea of an international body extending its jurisdiction further into their fishery zones.

Nevertheless, at the IWC's 1990 meeting in the Netherlands, a Resolution was passed requesting the Scientific Committee to collect evidence of threats to small cetaceans. This evidence was presented in a report at this year's meeting. The Resolution also requested Japan to reduce its take of Dall's porpoises and Japan has started to bring this fishery under control.

At this year's meeting two further Resolutions on small cetaceans were introduced. One, which was adopted by consensus, called for the Scientific Committee to continue its work on small cetaceans, and requests the Secretary of the IWC to forward the small cetaceans report to the Secretariat of the

United Nations Conference of Environment and Development (UNCED) so that its findings can be put before the World Conference next year in Brazil.

The other Resolution requested conservation measures for certain seriously endangered species. The meeting was extremely reluctant to adopt this Resolution and it was withdrawn. Thus perceptions of national interest and national sovereignty remain a major obstacle to progress on assisting small cetaceans through the IWC.

Other developments

Requests for quotas from Japan for minke whales, and from Iceland for fin and minke whales were rejected. Norway's request for the removal of the north-east Atlantic minke whale's status as a protected stock (under the existing management procedure) was also rejected. Tight quota arrangements were set for aboriginal subsistence whaling by Alaskan Inuits and native Greenlanders. Japan was invited to reconsider its proposal to continue its killing of minke whales in the Antarctic under scientific permits, because such killing contributes nothing to the revised management procedure; and the USSR was requested to refrain from issuing permits for scientific whaling.

Conclusion

The IWC is still on the road, but whether it can survive its impending collision with the growing conservation ethos that exploitation should be avoided unless it is really necessary is not yet clear. There is a real doubt as to whether the outdated constitution of the IWC can cope with the strains being imposed upon it. At this year's meeting, Iceland stepped up its threat to leave the IWC, and Norway has since confirmed that it is also considering its position. The earliest that either country could leave the IWC would be June 1992, and their intention to withdraw at that date must be communicated formally by 31 December this year. But leaving the IWC would mean diplomatic isolation and international condem-

nation. It could also lead to US trade sanctions; and the whalers would still face the fact that international trade in whale products is illegal under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), although Japan and Norway both maintain reservations on several whale species and are thus not bound by them; and Iceland is not even a party to the convention.

The whales have lost none of their potency as a symbol but whereas they were formerly a symbol of man's reckless destruction of nature, they are now emerging as a potential symbol of man's ability to draw back from exploitation in the interests of the planet as a whole.

James Martin-Jones, WWF UK, Panda House, Weyside Park, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1XR, UK.

Coral seizure

The Marine Conservation Society had been investigating the retail side of the marine curio trade and suspected that illegally imported Philippine corals were still in circulation. Their fears were confirmed recently when a random search of a Russian freighter at Tilbury followed by a raid on a warehouse in Boston, Lincolnshire, uncovered 17 tonnes of Philippine coral.

All hard corals are listed in Appendix II of CITES, which allows trade only if consignments are accompanied by export permits. In addition, European Community regulations require import permits. The Philippines was—and it seems still is—a major exporter of reef coral. Yet collection and export have been banned since 1977, apart from a lapse between 1 May and 22 November 1986, 'to clear stocks'. Since November 1986 (CITES came into force for corals in 1985), no export licences should have been issued. Unscrupulous dealers are still getting round the regulations; either with false documentation, or no documents at all. The material seized had been described as 'driftwood and rock'.

The Marine Conservation Society is also

aware of some genuine misunderstandings about CITES and other legislation concerning trade in marine species. It will shortly be publishing a booklet designed specifically to bridge this information gap, and make dealers more aware of the conservation issues.

Reefs in many parts of the world are under severe stress, but those in the Philippines have been particularly badly damaged as a result of siltation, pollution, over-fishing and dynamite fishing. Coral collection is an added problem and increased vigilance is required in importing countries in order to intercept illegal shipments. Less than 5 per cent of Philippine reefs are in good condition and about one-third are assessed as being poor. Damaged reefs are unproductive and may take years to recover.

Elizabeth Wood and Sue Wells, Marine Conservation Society, 9 Gloucester Road, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire HR9 5BU, UK.

A clearing to protect the forest

The 2200 Awá Indians who live in Ecuador along its border with Colombia were virtually unknown to the outside world until about 10 years ago. Today the rain forest on which they depend is endangered. There are cattle ranchers to the east, loggers to the west and oil-palm plantations to the north. Colonists threaten from all sides, clearing the forest, overhunting and fishing with dynamite.

About 6 years ago the Awá started to battle against these destructive forces. With the help of a former US Peace Corps volunteer and a national coalition of Indians, the tribe established its first government, built schools and persuaded the Ecuadorean government to train members of its community as teachers and health workers. They have had to use force on occasion to keep away intruders but their most powerful weapon has proved to be a novel land-management technique they call the *manga*, a 9–14-m wide, 240-km long cleared strip of land encircling Awá territory. In 1988, largely because of the *manga*, Ecuador's government designated Awá lands an Ethnic Forest Reserve, the first in South America. It was a victory, not only for the

Indians but also for the rich species assemblage of the forest.

The manga is kept clear with machetes, although valuable tree species are left for future use; it not only clearly delineates the Indian's territory and deters intruders, but the land is useful for crops too.

The system has proved to be so effective that others want to try it: the Colombian Awá, the Huaorani of eastern Ecuador and the Embera of Colombia. Meanwhile the directors of the Río Palanche Reserve, Colombia's largest wildlife sanctuary, are considering using the manga concept as a land-management tool.

While success can be claimed so far, communal land title remains an elusive goal for the Awá and without it the government could dissolve the reserve at any time. Gold-mining companies operate outside its borders and the reserve's status does not exclude mining. The most pressing problem is the 70,000 non-indigenous people who live in the San Lorenzo area, nearly half of whom live by wood exploitation. However, there is a ray of hope: they themselves are being helped by the government to find economic alternatives to plundering the rain forest.

Source: Schwartz, D.M. *International Wildlife*, July–August 1991, 4–11.

Endemic invertebrates extinct on St Helena

For 3 weeks in March–April 1988 two members of staff from the Zoological Society of London visited the island of St Helena in the South Atlantic. The purpose of the visit was to determine the status of two endemic invertebrates, the St Helena giant earwig *Labidura herculeana*, the world's largest earwig, and the ground beetle *Aplothorax burchelli*. Both are listed as endangered by the IUCN and neither had been seen since a Belgian Zoological expedition collected specimens for taxonomic purposes in 1965–1967 (Brindle, 1970; Basilewsky, 1972). Both have been found alive only in an area centred on Horse Point Plain, a dry and mostly barren area of approximately 1 sq km



From left to right: male *L. herculeana*; female *L. herculeana*; *L. riparia* (occurs with *L. herculeana* on St Helena); common earwig *Forficula auricularia* with a widespread distribution in Europe.

in the north-east of the island, and were primarily collected from under stones or in soil fissures.

In 1988, Horse Point Plain was thoroughly searched by day and, using head torches, by night for adult and immature stages of either invertebrate. Pit-fall traps and humidity lures (dampened earth-filled sacks) were set up and trenches dug to uncover invertebrates sheltering underground. In addition, areas of the island with similar habitat to Horse Point Plain were searched. No live specimens of either insect were found, despite good rainfall creating excellent conditions for both invertebrates to be active.

Large accumulations of *A. burchelli* wing cases and legs, and abdominal appendages of *L. herculeana* were discovered beneath stones and around vegetation, but it was not possible to 'age' these remains. Large accumulations of rodent faeces, suspected to be of the mouse *Mus musculus brevirostris*, were found associated with the remains of both invertebrates, and the wing cases of the beetle often showed suspected *Mus* tooth marks. Both *L. herculeana* and *A. burchelli* in the adult stage would seem a very large prey item for *M. m. brevirostris*, which might however be able to tackle the immature stages. Since the Belgian expedition, a refuse tip has been sited at the landward end of Horse Point Plain and this has undoubtedly increased the mouse population.

Little information exists about the ecology of Horse Point Plain when the two inverte-

brates were last recorded. It is possible that competition or predation by introduced earwigs *L. riparia* and *Euborellia annulipes*, centipedes *Scolopendra morsitans*, scorpions *Isometrus maculatus*, or the carabid beetle *Campalita compositarum* might have occurred, but all these other invertebrates were also present in 1965–1967.

A member of the St Helena Agriculture and Forestry Department has continued to search for both insects, but no sightings have been made and it is almost certain that they are extinct.

During the expedition, liaison was made with the island's media, and work continues at London Zoo's Invertebrate Department to heighten awareness about the island's considerable endemic invertebrate fauna (Pearce Kelly and Cronk 1990).

A detailed report of the expedition's work is available from the Invertebrate Department, London Zoo, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY, UK.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to the people of St Helena for their co-operation and kindness. The expedition was coordinated by Paul Pearce Kelly.

References

- Basilevsky, P. 1972. *La faune terrestre de l'île de Sainte-Hélène. Deuxième Partie: Carabidae*. Musée Royal d'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren Serie in/8 (Sciences Zoologique). No. 192. 84 pp.
- Brindle, A. 1970. Dermaptera. *La faune terrestre de l'île de Sainte-Hélène. Annales Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale*, 181, 213–217.
- Pearce Kelly, P.P. and Cronk, Q.C.B. 1990. *St Helena Natural Treasury*. Proceedings of symposium published by the Zoological Society of London.
- Dave Clarke, Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY, UK.
- Richard Veal, Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust, Les Augrès Manor, Trinity, Jersey, Channel Islands.

Correction and comment

Professor Hideo Obara writes to correct a wrong impression given in 'The threatened



This poster has been produced as part of the conservation effort to save the Pemba flying fox, whose plight was described in the April 1991 issue of *Oryx*.

bears of Hokkaido (*Oryx*, 24, 124) where it was stated that brown bears *Ursus arctos* once lived in Japan's two largest main islands. The statement refers to 10,000-year-old remains on Honsyu. In modern times *U. arctos* has occurred only in Hokkaido.

Seymour H. Levy comments on the reintroduction of thick-billed parrots into Arizona (*Oryx*, 24, 227). He says, 'current efforts to establish this species as a breeding bird in Arizona are almost certain to fail. There is no acceptable and reliable documentation of the thick-billed parrot breeding in Arizona or anywhere else north of Mexico. Dr Allan R. Phillips (*Birds of Arizona*, University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 1964) states that "it has never nested in the United States". If Arizona was suitable and acceptable for the thick-billed parrot's nesting requirements, surely they would have done so during their infrequent sporadic invasions'.