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Whaling

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This issue of Caribbean Currents deals with the controversial topic of whaling. While St. Vincent and the Grenadines is currently the only whaling nation in the Caribbean, there are seven Caribbean nations with a vote in the International Whaling Commission, which regulates whaling activities worldwide. Whales are a valuable resource, either because of the high price of their meat or because of their popularity with tourists. With whale populations slowly rebounding after near-extinction from over-hunting, the IWC must soon decide how to manage whale populations. This issue discusses the international laws regulating whaling and several of the issues surrounding the management of whale resources. If you have any comments on this or any topic, would like to contribute a short article, or have a resource guide to share, please submit your contribution by following the guidelines on page 8. We are grateful for all comments and contributions.

Welcome to *CARIBBEAN CURRENTS*, Volume Eight, Number Two. This newsletter is edited by INFOTERRA/USA in its capacity as the Regional Service Centre (RSC) for INFOTERRA National Focal Points (NFPs) in the English and French-speaking Caribbean. Although the *CURRENTS* is assembled at INFOTERRA/USA, the content belongs to you, the readers. You are encouraged to send in any questions, comments, problems, or interesting issues relevant to the Region for inclusion in the *CURRENTS*. Please see the Guidelines for Contributions on page 7 for more information.

Each issue features a Directory of NFPs in the Region so that anyone with international environmental questions can contact their nearest resource. Please feel free to contact one another as well as your RSC for assistance or materials.

Please don't hesitate to share *CARIBBEAN CURRENTS* with your friends and colleagues, and to make copies as needed. The Currents should serve as an informational forum for anyone who lives, works, or is involved in environmental issues in the English and French-speaking Caribbean Region.

An Introduction to Whaling Issues

Whaling in the Caribbean

Generally, when the world thinks of whale-hunting nations, it does not think of the Caribbean. The whaling tradition in the Caribbean is not long, dating back only to 1875, and is limited to the island of Bequia in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (World Wildlife Fund, 1999). Even on Bequia, the whaling population consists of one man and his associates, who are allowed to take two humpback whales per season under an "aboriginal whaling" clause of the International Whaling Commission's 1986 moratorium on commercial whaling (Hawley, 1999). However, the Caribbean sits right in the middle of the whaling debate. Since 1992, the Caribbean members of the International Whaling Commission, including non-whaling nations, have consistently voted in favor of repealing the moratorium (Fineman, 1999). Members of the IWC in the French- and English-speaking Caribbean are St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Grenada, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, and St. Kitts and Nevis. Beginning in 1986, Japan, an aggressively pro-whaling nation, began providing financial and technical aid to these nations to the tune of \$80 million U.S. dollars to date (Fineman, 1999). According to the Los Angeles Times and the St. Lucia

Mirror, the fact that these nations began to vote in favor of whaling, and, in the case of St. Lucia, reversed their position on whaling, is no coincidence. Japan pays the dues for membership in the IWC for each of these nations as well (Fineman, 1997). This money has served to tip the balance of votes in the IWC in the favor of pro-whaling interests (Fineman, 1997). In 1997, the resolution to repeal the ban on commercial whaling failed by its smallest margin: 12 in favor and 16 against (Fineman, 1997). Japan, a Los Angeles Times article argues, is using financial aid to Caribbean nations in order to pressure them into voting in concert with Japanese interests; in effect, buying votes (St. Lucia Mirror, 1997). This situation highlights Caribbean dependence on foreign aid since the decline of the banana industry. The U.S. has been accused of using the same tactics as Japan, using development projects or the threat of trade sanctions in order to win anti-whaling votes (Swardson, 1997). The necessity of conserving and protecting whales is inarguable, but it must be done in concert with plans to develop Caribbean economies. It currently appears that not only are whales in danger, but so are the autonomy and self-determination of Caribbean nations.

Aboriginal Rights and Whales as Food

Currently, there are two clauses under the 1986 moratorium on commercial whaling under which whales can be hunted: for the subsistence of indigenous peoples and for scientific research. It is under the subsistence clause that St. Vincent and the Grenadines is permitted to hunt whales. However, there are differences between St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a small relatively developed Caribbean island nation, and the indigenous peoples of the Arctic and sub-Arctic, who have relied on sea mammals as the sole source of protein for thousands of years (Hawley, 1999). One argument for continuing to allow whaling in the Caribbean is that the "aboriginal right" to hunt whales means not only hunting whales for a subsistence protein source, but hunting whales to continue traditions (Hawley, 1999). This argument makes sense when made by the indigenous peoples of the far north, where the whale hunt has long been a social and religious tradition, but breaks down when applied to the Caribbean, where whaling was introduced in 1875 as a commercial venture (World Wildlife Fund, 1999). The leading reason for hunting whales under the aboriginal rights clause is because of their food value. Whales can weigh upwards of forty tons, and one whale could feed large numbers of people. However, it has been shown that whale meat is more often than not used as animal feed, as in Norway and in Siberia, or sold in Asian countries as a delicacy, fetching prices of up to \$600 U.S. dollars a kilogram (White, 1995, and Paddock, 1997). In the twentieth century, whale meat is not a staple. Ironically, blubber biopsies of blue and beluga whales carried out by researchers affiliated with Trent University in Canada have shown that whale meat is contaminated by bioaccumulative pollutants such as PCBs, DDT, and other pesticides, making it dangerous to eat (de Konig and Wild, 1997).

Conservation and Sustainability

Obviously, this article has been written from the viewpoint of protecting and conserving whale species and upholding the moratorium on commercial whaling. However, there are a few cogent arguments for resuming commercial whaling, among them the right of sovereign states and peoples to utilize their renewable resources in a sustainable fashion. This argument hinges on the belief that whales are a renewable resource, and that it is possible to sustainably harvest them. Pro-whaling interests cite statistics which count minke and sperm whale populations to be over one million, and thus demonstrating the need to cull certain species, while other estimates have been far more conservative. The fact is, however, that even with the moratorium on commercial whaling, with allowances for scientific research and aboriginal subsistence, whale hunting is still not being done in a sustainable fashion, with loopholes regularly being exploited and illegal hunting being commonplace (Holt, 1999). DNA testing of whale meat available in the Asian market has shown that meat from endangered whale species are sold as well, in spite of a ban on hunting endangered species (Bowen, 2000). Indeed, the International Whaling Commission, the body which regulates whaling, has no power to enforce its resolutions, which are non-binding and voluntary; a return to commercial whaling would no doubt be a return to over-hunting and imminent extinction for many species. Too, whales are not necessarily a renewable resource. Whales are threatened not only by over-exploitation, but by pollution and global warming as well, and it is highly possible that whale populations could never recover should large-scale commercial whaling resume. There is also a moral dimension to preserving whales, based on the idea that protecting a species is an end unto itself. Whales have grown to be something greater than themselves, either as emblems of a fragile earth or as representatives of a spiritual order, and slaughtering such beasts for profit or animal feed is not easily justifiable. A far more sustainable fashion to exploit whale resources would be to develop eco-tourism in the Caribbean and tap into the \$122.4 million (1995) U.S. dollars in whale-watching revenues worldwide (World Wildlife Fund, 1999). Whales are such a rich resource that it is unlikely that they will ever be simply left alone, and unfortunately, in the battle to determine how these resources will be exploited, small nations are being exploited as well.

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International Bodies and Laws Governing Whaling

International Whaling Commission

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/iwcoffice/>

As whales are migratory species, their conservation is only governable by international convention. The International Whaling Commission was inaugurated under the 1946 Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, when the world recognized that whale resources were on the verge of collapse and in need of management if harvests were to continue into the future. The Convention took force in 1948, in order to "provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry." The IWC acts as a game warden for whales: it studies whale populations, sets quotas, designates whale sanctuaries and debates the most humane way to kill a whale. Its membership is open to anyone who adheres to the 1946 Convention, and is generally comprised of whaling nations. In 1972 it was recognized by the United Nations during the Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm as the unique body responsible for regulating whale harvests (Holt, 1999).

For the first twenty years of the IWC's existence, whale conservation was negligible; catch limits were far too high and often exceeded, and whale species continued to be depleted. (Mulvaney, *History of the IWC*). In both 1972 and 1974, ten-year moratoria were suggested but failed to pass. In 1974, instead of a moratorium, the IWC developed the New Management Procedure (NMP), which classified each species with respect to its degree of depletion, and imposed a zero quota if the population fell below sustainable levels. While quotas were still set too high, the passage of the NMP marked the first time that precaution and the realization that whale stocks were not inexhaustible entered into whale management. In 1979, the IWC passed a moratorium on whaling using factory ships. However, by 1980 it became clear that the NMP was

not working, and in 1982 a ten-year moratorium on commercial whaling was passed, which took force in 1986 and is still in effect (Mulvaney, *History of the IWC*).

Unfortunately, the IWC is, and has always been, a toothless organization. It has no legal authority to enforce its policies, and under section (5(3)) of the 1946 Convention, any party which lodges an objection to a resolution is not bound by it. The aboriginal subsistence and the scientific whaling loopholes are regularly exploited to include whaling from commercial purposes, with Japan alone killing 200-400 whales every year, ostensibly for scientific purposes (Mulvaney, *The Whaling Effect*). Too, IWC meetings are regularly deadlocked, with non-whaling nations joining in order to have a voice in whaling issues. This has resulted in the formation of new whaling regulatory organizations, comprised only by whaling nations, with membership only open by agreement of the other parties. Currently these organizations include the North Atlantic Marine Mammals Conservation Organization, and the proposed Caribbean Marine Mammals Organization (Holt, 1999). It appears as if the IWC is adrift and losing what authority it has. Certainly, whale kills continue to increase, from 383 kills in 1992 to 1209 in 1998, and they show no signs of stopping (Mulvaney, *The Whaling Effect*). Still, without the IWC, there would be no regulation of whaling at all.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES)

<http://www.wcmc.org.uk/CITES/eng/index.shtml>

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) was drawn up in 1973 and came into force in 1975, with the purpose of protecting wildlife against over-exploitation and preventing international trade from threatening species with extinction. Parties wishing to establish an international trade in, say, whales or tigers, must first prove that such trade does not harm the survival and well-being of that species or that individual specimen. As this generally precludes the killing of animals for meat or fur, CITES effectively bans the international trade in endangered species or their products. Species regulated by CITES are listed in three appendices to the Convention: Appendix I, for the most endangered species; Appendix II, for species at serious risk; and Appendix III, for species subject to regulation. Most great whale species are listed in Appendix I and are subject to the most stringent regulation; Appendix II and III allow for some trade in listed species. CITES differs from IWRC in that it is binding for all parties.

It is the huge profits that can be realized from the international trade in whale meat that drives commercial whaling, and is behind the effort to repeal the 1986 moratorium. As we have seen, IWC has little power to enforce its own restrictions on whaling, and large numbers of whales can be killed legally for meat each year through exploiting loopholes in the IWRC anyway. It is CITES, which forbids the importing or exporting of whale meat, that keeps whalers in check. For example, whale meat which sells for hundreds of US dollars a pound in Japan sells for less than ten US dollars a pound in Norway and less than that in St. Vincent (Berg, 1998, and Junger, 1996). It is the fact that whalers cannot export their meat to Japan that prevents whalers from killing more whales than their "domestic needs" require. However, both Norwegian and Japanese pro-whaling interests are pushing to de-list certain species of whale, such as the minke whale, from Appendix I to Appendix II, which would open up the unlimited markets of Asia to Atlantic whalers, and lead the way for the resumption of large-scale commercial whaling throughout the rest of the world, including the Caribbean (Holt, 1999).

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World Wide Web Sites on Whaling Issues

Cetacean Research Unit

<http://www.cetacean.org/>

The homepage of CRU, a research institution dedicated to conservation.

Cetacean Society International

<http://elfnet1a.elfi.com/csihome.html>

The homepage of Cetacean Society International. CSI is dedicated to the preservation and protection of all cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) and the marine environment on a global basis. This site has many articles on the smuggling of whale meat and illegal whale hunting.

High North Alliance

<http://www.highnorth.no/>

The homepage of the High North Alliance, a Norwegian pro-whaling group, which argues that “aboriginal subsistence” should be expanded to include “community-based” commercial whaling.

International Network for Whaling Research

<http://www.ualberta.ca/~inwr/INWR.html>

A network of anthropologists and other researchers who study subsistence and artisanal whaling societies.

International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASCP)

<http://www.indiana.edu/~iascp/index.html>

The homepage of the International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASCP), a nonprofit association devoted to understanding and improving institutions for the management of environmental resources that are (or could be) held or used collectively by communities in developing or developed countries. This site contains many articles on economics and whaling.

International Whaling Commission

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/iwcoffice/>

The homepage of the IWC.

Japan Whaling Association

<http://www.jp-whaling-assn.com/english/index.htm>

A pro-whaling site from an association of Japanese whaling interests.

The Makah Indian Tribe and Whaling: A Fact Sheet Issued by the Makah Whaling Commission

<http://conbio.rice.edu/nae/docs/makahfaq.html>

The Makah, a Native American people in the Pacific Northwest region of the USA, are allowed to take five migrating grey whales a year under the subsistence whaling clause. This is a fact sheet describing the history of whaling among the Makah, planned uses for the whale, and the legal and ethical basis for whale hunting by the Makah.

Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society

<http://www.wdcs.org/>

The homepage of the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, with a great deal of information on commercial and aboriginal whaling. There are a number of detailed articles on whaling in the Caribbean.

Whales in Danger Information Service

<http://whales.magna.com.au/>

An anti-whaling information service.

World Council of Whalers

<http://worldcouncilofwhalers.com/>

The homepage of the World Council of Whalers, an international non-profit founded in 1997 to advance the interests of sustainable whale hunting.

WWF International Whaling Commission Website

<http://panda.org/iwc/index.html>

A site from the World Wildlife Fund on the IWC and whaling issues. Includes an article on the "whaling effect," population charts, and statistics on the number of whales killed through loopholes in the International Convention to Regulate Whaling since the moratorium on commercial whaling.

Current Conferences in Whale Issues

Fifty-Second Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission. June 12-July 6, 2000. Adelaide, Australia.

http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/iwcoffice/2000_meeting.htm

Contact: Conference Logistics

P.O. Box 201, Deacon West ACT 2600

21 Kent Street, Deacon

Tel: (02) 6281 6624

Fax: (02) 6285 1336

E-mail: conference@conlog.com.au

URL: <http://www.conlog.com.au/>

Third World Fisheries Congress: Sustainable Fisheries and Optimizing Food Composition. October 31-November 3, 2000. Beijing, China.

<http://ag.ansc.purdue.edu/aquanic/calendar/thrdwrdcongress.htm>

Contact: Congress Secretariat:

China Society of Fisheries

Bldg. 22, Maizidian Street, Chaoyang District 100026

Beijing P.R. China

Tel: 86-10-64194233, 64194234

Fax: 86-10-64194231

Email: csfish@agri.gov.cn

cnsfish@public.bta.net.cn

URL: www.fisheries.moa.gov.cn

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora: Eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Gigiri (Kenya), 10-20 April 2000.

<http://www.wcmc.org.uk/CITES/eng/cop/11/docs/index.shtml>

Contact: CITES Secretariat

International Environment House, 15, chemin des Anémones, CH-1219

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International Association for the Study of Common Property 8th Biennial Conference: Crafting Sustainable Commons in the New Millennium. May 31-June 4, 2000. Bloomington, Indiana.

<http://www.indiana.edu/~iascp/2000.html>

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Listservs on Whale Topics

Migration Discussion List

The Migration Discussion List provides a forum for researchers, conservationists and members of the legal profession interested in the conservation of migratory species. The list is sponsored by the Zoological Research Institute and Museum Alexander Koenig (ZFMK) and the American Society of International Law - Wildlife Interest Group Subscription instructions: Send an email message to: majordomo@listserv.uni-bonn.de; Leave the subject line blank; in the body of the message, type: subscribe migration firstname lastname

MARMAM[Marine Mammal Group]Listserv

MARMAM is an edited e-mail discussion list devoted to topics in marine mammal research and conservation, established in August 1993. Subscribers to the list are from all over the world and from a wide range of backgrounds. Anyone may subscribe to the list. Commonly seen messages include requests for information regarding current or recent research projects, publications, or research techniques; current or previously unreported news events, meeting announcements, job or volunteer opportunities, scientific abstracts, and new books/techniques/products announcements. To subscribe, send an email message to listserv@uvvm.uvic.ca which says: subscribe marmam firstname lastname

Guidelines for Contributions to *CARIBBEAN CURRENTS*

Any organization or individual operating or involved in the English and French-speaking Caribbean Region is welcome to contribute to the newsletter. Contributions should be addressed to:

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Please note that submissions should meet the following criteria:

- They are relevant to environmental issues
- They must be of interest to or directly involve the Region
- They must not endorse or recommend any product or commercial service, explicitly or implicitly
- They must be received by the posted deadline (see below)

Please feel free to contact the *CARIBBEAN CURRENTS* coordinator if you are interested in submitting an article. Please note that once your article is submitted, it is subject to editing as needed. Final decisions on editing and inclusion of any contributions are left to the INFOTERRA/USA Manager. Caribbean Currents is available on the Internet at <http://www.epa.gov/earlink1/currents/>.

DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO Vol. 8 No. 3: June 1, 2000

About the NFP Directory

This directory reflects changes and additions to the INFOTERRA Directory of National Focal Points distributed by INFOTERRA/PAC, dated November 1998. Please check this information to verify that it is correct and up-to-date. If you have any changes or corrections, please notify the RSC as soon as possible. We will be happy to relay the information to the PAC.

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