

Soundings



American Cetacean Society- Monterey Bay Chapter
PO Box H E, Pacific Grove, CA 93950

MAY 2010

**MONTHLY MEETING AT HOPKINS MARINE STATION, LECTURE
HALL BOAT WORKS BUILDING
(ACROSS FROM THE AMERICAN TIN CANNERY OUTLET STORES)**

MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

DATE: THURSDAY, MAY 27TH, 2010

**TIME: 7:30 PM. PLEASE JOIN US AT 7:00 FOR
REFRESHMENTS**

SPEAKER Steven K. Webster, Ph. D., Monterey Bay Aquarium

Title: Ricketts and Steinbeck in the Sea of Cortez

The history of the Monterey Peninsula is rich and diverse and the chapters of that history from the 1930s and 1940s are no exception. During that time Ed Ricketts operated Pacific Biological Laboratories and he wrote the seminal work for marine ecology: Between Pacific Tides (1939).

His close friend, John Steinbeck, was also prolific during that time publishing many well known and award winning works. Steinbeck was often able to draw on his "local" experiences in his writing and Ed Ricketts was often a model for characters in these books. Perhaps the most well know characterization of Ed was as Doc Ricketts in Cannery Row (1945).

In 1940 these men went on a very real adventure and expedition, sailing from Monterey to the Sea of Cortez (Gulf of California) aboard the Western Flyer. This trip was recorded in print in 1941 in The Sea of Cortez co-authored by Ricketts and Steinbeck and then again in 1951 in The Log from the Sea of Cortez authored by Steinbeck alone.

Our speaker is well suited to provide inside information and insight about these men and this expedition. Dr. Webster has made Peninsula history himself as one of the founders of the Monterey Bay Aquarium, among many other things. As a scientist, his background as an invertebrate zoologist and ecologist allows him to bring a special perspective to this presentation. He has also logged many experiences in Baja California and the Sea of Cortez himself.

Please join us for what promises to be an informative and entertaining evening about these men, who are still a significant part of the Peninsula's history, and their journey to the Sea of Cortez.

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CALENDAR

Hopkins Marine Station Spring 2010 Lecture

May 14 Barbara Block, Sushi and Satellites: The Science and Policy of Managing Giant Bluefin Tuna

May 21 Julia Baum, National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis
Shark Attack: Conservation, Ecosystem, and Societal Consequences for Depleting the Oceans Apex Predators

May 28 Wayne Trivelpiece, NOAA Using Adelle Penguins as Sentinels for Climate Change

May 17-21: 61st Tuna Conference. Lake Arrowhead, CA. "It's Not About the Catch but the Bycatch".

May 22 (Sat) 8am-4pm. ACS National Humpback Whale Fundraiser Trip will take place on the Condor Express Santa Barbara. For more info and to make reservations call Bernardo Alps at (310) 597-0449

May 29-31 Memorial Day weekend : 2-3 Day Blue Whale Search Aboard the Searcher. Spend 3 days in search of the great blue whale aboard San Diego based natural history boat the Searcher. Trip includes forays to the 9-mile bank and the Coronado Islands. Cost is \$395.00 For more info go to searcher@bajawhale.com

July 24 (Sat): ACS National Blue Whale Trip will take place on the Condor Express based out of Sea Landing in Santa Barbara, CA. Depart at 8am and return at 4pm. For more info and reservations call Bernardo Alps at 310-548-0966

August 25-29: Blue Ocean Film Festival. Monterey, CA. A global Ocean Film and Conservation Event (www.bluefilmfest.com). More Info To Follow.

August 28, 9am-1pm: ACS Monterey Bay Chapter Summer Whale Watch Fundraiser. Cost-\$50 Boat-Sea Wolf 2. Location-Monterey Bay Whale Watch-Fisherman's Wharf, Monterey, CA. Whales of the summer include blue, humpback, fin, minke and killer whales. For more info and reservations call Tony Lorenz at 831-901-7259

Nov.12-14: The American Cetacean Society 12th International Conference will be held in Monterey at the Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center. Local Monterey Bay ACS chapter volunteers are needed, and sign-ups will be available at the monthly meetings.

SUMMER CLASSES

Point Lobos Summer Adventure 2010

Session 1 - June 14 thru June 26

Session 2- July 5 thru July 16

Kids 9-15 will learn about sea life, mammals, birds, invertebrates, go hiking, build sand castles and much more. For more info go to www.pointlobos.org.

UCSC Summer Marine Science Courses:

Biology of Marine Mammals Bio 129

Session Two: July 26-August 27, 2010

Marine Science Illustration SCIC 126

Session Two: July 26-August 27, 2010

MLML Summer Marine Mammal Courses

Classes meet at Moss Landing Marine Lab and will be taught by Dr. Jennifer Hurley Zelig. For more info contact Dr. Hurley at 831-771-4191.

Session 1: Working with Marine Mammals

Bio 348. June 14-20 9:30-5:30 M-F

Session 2: Techniques and Theories of Animal

Training Bio 347. June 28-July 4 9:30-5:30 M-F

BOOK RECOMMENDATION

National Geographic Oceans: Official Companion to the Disney Feature Film. Written by Francois Sarano and Stephane Duran.

Fishes of the Open Ocean: A Natural History and Illustrated Guide. Written by Julian Pepperell and Illustrated by Guy Harvey

Natures Ghosts-Confronting Extinction from the Age of Jefferson to the Age of Ecology. Written by Mark V. Barrow, Jr

Recent Mammals of Alaska: 115 species of Alaskan Mammals now for the first time fully documented and catalogued. Written by Stephen O. MacDonald and Joseph A. Cook

DVD-White Shark Café. A film by Sean Aronson
University of Chicago Press

COMMERCE TRUMPS SCIENCE AT CITES, THREATENED SHARKS AND BLUEFIN TUNA STILL AT RISK

Doha, Qatar - 26 March, 2010 -The 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) concluded without providing any trade protections whatsoever for severely depleted Atlantic bluefin tuna and four vulnerable species of sharks – scalloped hammerhead, oceanic white tip, porbeagle and spiny dogfish.

“We cannot continue to empty our oceans without consequence,” said Susan Lieberman, director of international policy for the Pew Environment Group. “The CITES treaty has historically protected species. At this meeting, governments abandoned conservation and chose to protect trade instead. The imperative to safeguard the larger iconic species increases with every catch.”

CITES has listed marine species previously - including seahorses, queen conch, sturgeon and humphead wrasse - although it has traditionally focused more on land-based species including elephants and tigers. This year, however, there were more commercial marine species proposed for protection than at any meeting in the Convention’s 35 years.

The shark fin trade - responsible for the killing up to 73 million sharks annually - and global demand for shark meat continue to threaten scalloped hammerhead, oceanic white tip, porbeagle and spiny dogfish sharks. A CITES Appendix II listing would have required countries exporting shark products to ensure that international trade is legal and would not threaten the survival of those species. While the porbeagle proposal was approved in committee by a single-vote margin, CITES delegates rejected all four proposals by the end of the final plenary session. “Despite fast declining populations of the ocean’s apex predators, CITES government delegates turned a blind eye to science,” said Matt Rand, director of global shark conservation for the Pew Environment Group. “Four threatened species of sharks were refused protections even though the evidence of international trade’s harmful effects

was plentiful. Inaction can and will set these sharks on a course toward total population collapse.”

CITES delegates had the opportunity to prohibit all international trade in bluefin tuna, but they rejected the Appendix I proposal.

Overfishing, illegal fishing and the growing demand for high-end raw bluefin as sushi and sashimi has fueled increased catches, further depleting this shrinking population. CITES received reports that the science is undeniable that the Atlantic bluefin tuna qualifies for the highest level of protection, but the governments voted against the bluefin proposal. In the wake of last week’s failed attempt at CITES to prohibit international trade in bluefin tuna, the Pew Environment Group today will launch a new campaign to protect breeding populations of bluefin in the Gulf of Mexico - the fish’s only known spawning ground in the western Atlantic Ocean.

The Pew Environment Group is the conservation arm of The Pew Charitable Trusts, a non-governmental organization that applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life.

CALIF. GRAY WHALE-WATCHERS FEAR

DIP IN POPULATION BY NOAKI SCHWARTZ

LOS ANGELES April 11– Gazing past the rolling whitecaps in the middle of San Diego’s whale-watching season, boat captain Bill Reese was dismayed by what he wasn’t seeing.

“Where are the whales?” said Reese. “Where are the whales?”

Long held as an environmental success story after being taken off the endangered list in 1994, California gray whales draw legions of fans into boats or atop cliffs to watch the leviathans lumber down the coast to spawning grounds in Baja.

But whale-watching skippers became alarmed after sightings dropped from 25 a day in good years to five a day this season. Such anecdotal evidence has left conservationists and state officials worried about the whale’s future, especially now.

The federal government's monitoring of the mammals has fallen off in recent years. And the International Whaling Commission in June will consider allowing 1,400 gray whales to be hunted over the next decade.

The decision will rely on a report that says the population is flourishing — a study critics say is spotty and outdated.

"If you count 2,500 animals, all you really know rock solid for sure is there are more than 2,500. Beyond that you're using models and assumptions," said Stanford University marine biology professor Steve Palumbi. "The problem comes when you say, 'We do know how many whales there are and we're going to start making unalterable management decisions on that basis.'"

The study draws on annual population estimates dating from 1967, but in the past decade only three census counts have been released, the most recent in 2006.

Since then, the estimated number of calves has plunged from more than 1,000 in 2006 to 312 in 2009. In addition, the species suffered a die-off of several thousand whales in 2000.

"You can't set specific quotas for 10 years based on 2006 data," said Sara Wan, a California Gray Whale Coalition member who is also a state coastal commissioner. "It's irresponsible."

In January, the California Coastal Commission pressed the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for an updated gray whale study. The count is done but the analysis won't be finished until long after the whaling commission's decision.

NOAA scientists say their population estimates are reliable because the numbers have remained relatively consistent over time. They say the drop in calf numbers may reflect nature thinning out the herd.

The population is still more than double what it was in the 1960s and has been fairly stable of the past couple decades, said Paul Wade,

one of the study's co-authors and a member of the commission's scientific committee.

"If it truly does go into an important decline, it's not going to happen overnight. We're going to see it," he said.

The gray whale's success has created a complex dynamic for NOAA researchers, who recently have focused on more threatened, less charismatic whales such as the North Atlantic Right whales, whose population may be as low as 30.

Over the years, scientists have been able to do a great amount of research on gray whales because they are so accessible and popular with the public. Any indication of trouble galvanizes countless fans.

"Gray whales are our pets, they're in our

backyard," said David Rugh, a NOAA biologist who oversaw gray whale counts for years. "Of course we have a concern about them going through so many environments from Mexico to the Arctic but there are other species out



there that we're also concerned about."

Gray whales migrate thousands of miles each fall from Alaska to Baja, then back north between February and May. They spend summers in the Bering Sea and Arctic.

Biologists sit in a little stand on California's central coast, counting adult whales as they swim south. Calves are counted as the whales make the return trip north. The counts are used to extrapolate overall population and monitor reproduction.

When gray whales were listed as endangered in 1970, an estimated 12,000 remained. A moratorium on commercial hunting and close monitoring helped the population rebound to more than 20,000.

Deemed recovered, the whales only needed to be monitored every five years, instead of annually, and there was no longer dedicated

funding for the whale, which cost about \$170,000 a season to count.

The 2006 count yielded about 2,500 whales, leading researchers to calculate about 20,000 whales total. The most recent calf count of 2009, however, revealed the fewest since 2001.

"These are troubling numbers," said Randy Reeves, chair of the Cetacean specialist group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. "If they're being reinforced by comments from whale watching guys, then it gets that much more troubling."

Wayne Perryman, who oversees NOAA gray whale counts, said he believes there is a correlation between lower reproduction rates and colder winters when lingering ice blocks whales from getting to feeding grounds. He also does not see reason to panic.

"I think it's like in a room when someone yells 'fire!'" Perryman said.

The whaling commission allows the Russian Chukotka people and the Makah Indian tribe in Washington to hunt 140 gray whales per year. While they typically revisit the issue every five years, the panel is considering limits through 2020.

Douglas DeMaster, the U.S. delegation's deputy commissioner, the number is about half of 1 percent of the current estimated population.

"This is a very conservative number and provides subsistence needs to aboriginals," he said.

But Liz Alter, a marine biologist with the Natural Resources Defense Council, said, "Given that we have very little ability to predict what climate change, ocean acidification and other threats will mean to the whale population for the coming years, it seems reckless to me to set catch limits for that length of time."

U.S. LEADS NEW BID TO PHASE OUT WHALE HUNTING

BY JOHN M. BRODER

WASHINGTON — The United States is leading an effort by a handful of anti-whaling nations to broker an agreement that would limit and ultimately end whale hunting by Japan, Norway and Iceland, according to people involved with the negotiations.

The compromise deal, which has generated intense controversy within the 88-nation International Whaling Commission and among anti-whaling activists, would allow the three whaling countries to continue hunting whales for the next 10 years, although in reduced numbers.

In exchange, the whaling nations — which have long exploited loopholes in an international treaty that aims to preserve the marine mammals — would agree to stricter monitoring of their operations, including the placing of tracking devices and international monitors on all whaling ships and participation in a whale DNA registry to track global trade in whale products.

Officials involved in the negotiations expressed tentative hope that they could reach an agreement in coming weeks. But ratification by the overall group remains uncertain.

"This is one of the toughest negotiations I've been involved in in 38 years," said Cristián Maquieira, the veteran Chilean diplomat who is the chairman of the commission. "If this initiative fails now, it means going back to years of acrimony."

Some pro-whale activists say the deal would grant international approval for the continued slaughter of thousands of minke, sei and Bryde's whales. They also say that the agreement does not prevent Japan and the other nations from resuming unlimited whaling once the 10-year period is up.

"From our point of view, it's a whaler's wish list," said Patrick R. Ramage, global whale program director at the International Fund for Animal Welfare. "It would overturn the '86 moratorium, eviscerate the South Ocean Whale Sanctuary, subordinate science and I.W.C. precedent to reward countries that have refused to comply by allocating quotas to those three countries."

"Rather than negotiate a treaty that brings commercial whaling to an end," he concluded, "they have created a system under which it will continue."

But Monica Medina, the No. 2 official at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration and the American delegate to the whaling body, said that Mr. Ramage and other critics were demanding a complete halt to whaling, an impossible goal, at least today.

“We can’t stop it; we can only try to control it,” Ms. Medina said in an interview.

“If we can prevent thousands of whales from being hunted and killed, that’s a real conservation benefit. This proposal would not only help whales, we hope, but also introduce rigorous oversight, halt the illegal trade in whale meat and bring respect for international law back to the I.W.C.,” she added. “Are we there yet? We’re not, and we have hard negotiations to go yet.”

Despite a 1986 international moratorium on commercial whaling, the numbers of whales killed annually has been rising steadily, to nearly 1,700 last year from 300 in 1990, as the three whaling nations have either opted out of the treaty or claimed to be taking whales only for legitimate scientific study. Most of the meat from the slaughtered whales is consumed in those three countries, although there appears to be a growing international black market in whale products.

Some officials warn that if this effort at compromise fails, the commission’s efforts to police whale hunting, long crippled by irreconcilable political divisions, will collapse.

“The I.W.C. is a mess. It’s a dysfunctional international organization,” said Sir Geoffrey Palmer, a former prime minister of New Zealand and chairman of the I.W.C. group trying to negotiate a deal. “I think this is probably the last chance the I.W.C. has to cure itself.”

Representatives to the whaling commission from more than a dozen nations — including the three whaling countries and New Zealand, Australia, Chile and other nations backing the compromise proposal — are in Washington this week to negotiate terms of the agreement, which would protect as many as 5,000 whales from hunting over the next decade, officials said. They said they hoped that the reduced hunt would give whale stocks time to recover and give negotiators time to write a new treaty that would bring an effective international ban on all commercial whaling.

The group plans to release a new draft of the compromise proposal next week, but it still must win the approval of three-quarters of the members of the whaling commission at its annual meeting in Agadir, Morocco, in late June.

The Japanese, who killed 1,001 whales last year, are the linchpin of any deal. Although the Japanese taste for whale meat is steadily declining, the Japanese see their ability to continue to hunt whales, not only in their coastal waters but in the open ocean around Antarctica, as a question of sovereignty. Critics say that the practice survives only with heavy government subsidies. But a single whale can bring as much as \$100,000 in Japanese fish markets. Japan is driving a hard bargain to demonstrate strength at home and perhaps to use as leverage in other international negotiations, officials involved in the talks said.

Joji Morishita, a senior official of the Japan Fisheries Agency and Tokyo’s representative to the whaling talks, said in a brief telephone interview that he was not authorized to discuss his country’s negotiating position. But he confirmed that Japan was at least willing to talk about a new whaling program that may result in a substantial reduction in its whale harvest over the next decade.

“We are fully engaged in this process,” he said.

Populations of some whale species have been growing since the moratorium ended decades of uncontrolled hunting, but whales around the world remain under threat, not only from hunting but also from ship strikes, pollution, habitat loss, climate change and entanglement in fishing nets.

Under terms of the compromise deal, which is being negotiated behind closed doors and remains subject to major changes, the three whaling nations agree to cut roughly in half their annual whale harvest. That would result in the saving of more than 5,000 whales over the next 10 years, compared with continued whaling at current levels.

The deal also proposes that no new countries be permitted to take whales, whale-watching ships would be monitored by the

whaling commission and all international trade in whale products be banned.

In addition, whalers would have to report the time of death and means of killing of all whales and provide DNA samples to a central registry to help track the end use of the dead animals.

Limited subsistence whaling by indigenous peoples in the United States, Greenland, Russia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines would be allowed to continue.

“Our goal is a significant reduction in the number of whales killed, but some limited whaling will be authorized as a price for that,” said Mr. Maquieira, the whaling commission chairman. “This is highly controversial and very difficult. I would prefer something different, but there is nothing out there.”

SIGHTINGS compiled by Monterey Bay Whale Watch. For complete listing and updates see www.gowhales.com/sighting.htm

Date	#	Type of Animal(s)
4/23	23	Killer Whales (transient type)
	700	Long-beaked Common Dolphins
	200	Northern Right Whale Dolphins
4/22	2	"Friendly" Humpback Whales
	1	Minke Whale
	20	Pacific White-sided Dolphins
	80	Risso's Dolphins
4/19	5	Humpback Whales
	400	Risso's Dolphins
4/19	1	Gray Whale
	300	Risso's Dolphins
4/18	2	Humpback Whales
	75	Pacific White-sided Dolphins
	700	Risso's Dolphins
	8	Killer Whales (transient type) *
4/18	7	Killer Whales (transient type)
	1	Humpback Whale
	35	Pacific White-sided Dolphins
	80	Risso's Dolphins
4/17	2	Humpback Whales
	30	Risso's Dolphins
4/17	1	Humpback Whale
	600	Pacific White-sided Dolphins

	80	Risso's Dolphins
	50	Northern Right Whale Dolphins
	15	Harbor Porpoise
4/16	1	Humpback Whale
4/16	2	Gray Whales
	2	Humpback Whales
4/15	3	Gray Whales
	5	Dall's Porpoise
4/15	3	Gray Whales
	6	Killer Whales *
4/14	5	Gray Whales
	50	Pacific White-sided Dolphins
	150	Risso's Dolphins
4/14	12	Killer Whales* (transient type)
4/13	1	Gray Whale
4/13	70	Pacific White-sided Dolphins
	60	Risso's Dolphins
4/9	3	Gray Whales
4/7	1	Humpback Whale
4/7	4	Gray Whales
4/6	2	Humpback Whales
4/6	2	Humpback Whales
	15	Risso's Dolphins
4/5	3	Gray Whales
	20	Risso's Dolphins
4/5	5	Gray Whales
4/3	1	Humpback Whale
4/3	3	Gray Whales
	2	Bottlenose Dolphins
4/3	1300	Pacific White-sided Dolphins
	300	Northern Right Whale Dolphins
4/2	6	Gray Whales
4/2	2	Gray Whales
4/1	40	Pacific White-sided Dolphins
	400	Risso's Dolphins
	50	Northern Right Whale Dolphins
4/1	5	Gray Whales
	700	Pacific White-sided Dolphins
	200	Northern Right Whale Dolphins

* transient type Killer Whale
Skipped dates indicate no trip

American Cetacean Society
Monterey Bay Chapter
P.O. Box H E
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