

March 2004

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Press Release

9 Mar 04

A new report, with a foreword by Sir David Attenborough, exposes the cruelty behind whaling.

A new report, 'Troubled Waters', is being released today to mark the launch of an international campaign against whaling. Key scientific and practical evidence is brought together for the first time to highlight the true extent of the cruelty inherent in the modern day killing of whales. More than 1,400 whales are expected to die this year alone in commercial and 'scientific' whaling operations by Norway, Japan and Iceland.

In his foreword, naturalist and broadcaster Sir David Attenborough describes how the report contains "hard scientific dispassionate evidence that there is no humane way to kill a whale at sea." An unprecedented coalition of over 140 non-governmental organisations in more than 55 countries is taking part in the 'Whalewatch' campaign. It is lobbying the International Whaling Commission (IWC) to call a halt to all commercial and scientific whaling operations, maintain the current ban on commercial whaling and bring the issue of cruelty back to the fore at the 2004 meeting of the IWC that will take place in Sorrento, Italy, in July.

Peter Davies, Director General of the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), one of the leading groups in the coalition, said, "The cruelty behind whaling has become obscured in recent years by abstract arguments over population statistics. The fact is that, whether it is one whale or a thousand, whaling is simply wrong on cruelty grounds alone."

Although commercial whaling has been banned since 1986, over 20,000 whales have been killed since the ban came into force. In addition, Japan and Norway have repeatedly announced their long-term intention of continuing whaling and resuming commercial trade in whale products. The technology used for killing whales has altered little since the 19th century, when the grenade tipped harpoon was invented. The harpoon is intended to penetrate the whale's body before detonating, killing it by inflicting massive shock or injury. Given the constantly moving environment in which whales live and are hunted, there are inherent difficulties in achieving a quick clean kill. Despite its destructive power, the whaler's harpoon often fails to kill its victim instantaneously and some whales take over an hour to die.

The difficulties in hitting a whale with any degree of accuracy can be seen in the margin for human error. For instance, despite similar killing methods being used, Norway reported that one in five whales failed to die instantaneously during its 2002 hunt, whilst Japan reported that the majority of whales, almost 60%, failed to die instantaneously in its 2002/3 hunt.

Current tests to determine the moment of death in a whale are inadequate. The question remains whether whales may in fact still be alive long after having been judged to be dead. The full extent of their suffering is yet to be scientifically evaluated.

To find out more about the campaign, go online at <http://www.whalewatch.org>

Some of the NGOs that are part of the coalition are:

Brigitte Bardot Foundation

Campaign Whale

Care for the Wild

Dyrenes Beskyttelse (Danish Animal Welfare Society)

ECOTERRA Intl.

Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA)

Japan Animal Welfare Society (JAWS)
Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)
Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)
Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS)
World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA)

A simple reason to stop whaling: it's cruel
142 organisations unite to highlight horrific impact of harpooning
By Michael McCarthy, Environment Editor
9 March, 2004 - Animal welfare groups from around the world presented a report on whaling yesterday that aims to take the argument back to basics: the cruelty of the kill.

The report, likely to be seen as one of the most significant contributions to the whaling debate for many years, is a detailed scientific study of how much violence is needed to slaughter the world's largest animals in the open ocean.

Its premise is that much of the argument in the annual conferences of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) now tends to be about whale population statistics, and this has obscured the main issue - that the act of killing the great whales, usually by explosive harpoons, is unacceptably cruel.

The report, *Troubled Waters*, comprehensively reviews the animal welfare implications of modern whaling activities. It has been produced by 142 animal welfare organisations from 57 countries, including several from Britain, who have come together in a new coalition, *Whalewatch*. Its avowed purpose is to bring the issue of cruelty back to the fore at the next IWC meeting in Italy in July, and maintain the international moratorium on commercial whaling. The moratorium has been in force since 1986, but is increasingly being challenged by the three main pro-whaling nations - Japan, Norway and Iceland. Since it was introduced, more than 20,000 whales have been killed by the whaling countries - by Japan and recently Iceland under the guise of "scientific" whaling, and by Norway as a simple commercial hunt. In this coming year they are likely to kill more than 1,400 animals between them, mostly minke whales.

But the new report does not concern itself with numbers. It sets out to demonstrate, in extensive technical detail, that the great whales are so big and powerful that the amount of force needed to dispatch even one of them is unacceptably inhumane.

Britain's best-known naturalist, Sir David Attenborough, stresses the point in his foreword to the report. "The following pages contain hard scientific dispassionate evidence that there is no humane way to kill a whale at sea," says the broadcaster.

"Dr Harry Lillie, who worked as a ship's physician on a whaling trip in the Antarctic half a century ago, wrote this: 'If we can imagine a horse having two or three explosive spears stuck in its stomach and being made to pull a butcher's truck through the streets of London while it pours blood into the gutter, we shall have an idea of the method of killing. The gunners themselves admit that if whales could scream, the industry would stop for nobody would be able to stand it.' The use of harpoons with explosive grenade heads is still the main technique used by whalers today."

Sir David suggests that any reader of the report should "decide for yourself whether the hunting of whales in this way should still be tolerated by a civilised society."

Peter Davies, director general of the World Society for the Protection of Animals, one of the leading groups in the coalition, said: "The cruelty behind whaling has become obscured in recent years by abstract arguments over population statistics. The fact is that, whether it is one whale or a thousand, whaling is simply wrong on cruelty grounds alone."

The technology used for killing whales has altered little since the 19th century, when the grenade-tipped harpoon was invented. The penthrite grenade harpoon, the main killing method today, is fired from a cannon mounted on the bow of a ship. It is intended to penetrate a foot into the whale before detonating. The aim is to kill the animal through neurotrauma induced by the blast-generated pressure waves of the explosion.

However, if the first harpoon fails to kill the whale, then a second penthrite harpoon or a shot from a rifle is used as a secondary killing method. But given the constantly moving environment in which whales live, there are inherent difficulties in achieving a quick clean kill, the report says, and despite its destructive power, the whaler's harpoon often fails to kill its victim instantaneously, and some whales take more than an hour to die.

The difficulties in hitting a whale with any degree of accuracy can be seen in the margin for human error. For example, despite similar killing methods being used, Norway reported that one in five whales failed to die instantaneously during its 2002 hunt, while Japan reported that the majority of whales - almost 60 per cent - failed to die instantaneously during its 2002-03 hunt.

Tests to determine the moment of death of a whale are inadequate, the report says, and the question remains whether whales may in fact still be alive long after having been judged to be dead. The full extent of their suffering is yet to be scientifically evaluated.
<http://news.independent.co.uk/world/environment/story.jsp?story=499374>
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Whaling 'too cruel to continue'

By Alex Kirby - BBC News Online environment correspondent
Animal welfare campaigners say methods of killing whales are so inhumane that all whaling operations should cease.

A coalition of 140 groups, Whalewatch, says many whales do not die quickly when hit, and tests to decide exactly when a whale is dead are inadequate.

The well-known UK naturalist Sir David Attenborough says in a foreword that Whalewatch's report shows "there is no humane way to kill a whale at sea".

But whalers say their methods are not cruel, and reject calls to end whaling.

Whaling continues

The Whalewatch report, *Troubled Waters*, is published to mark the start of a global campaign against whaling.

Coalition members, from 55 countries, include the World Society for the Protection of Animals and the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society.

The gunners themselves admit that if whales could scream the industry would stop, for nobody would be able to stand it

Dr Harry Lillie

Whalewatch is lobbying the International Whaling Commission to halt all commercial and scientific whaling, to maintain the commercial whaling moratorium in force since 1986, and to concentrate on the issue of cruelty.

The report says more than 1,400 whales are likely to die this year alone, despite the moratorium.

Most whales are killed with harpoons designed to explode inside them, though small traditional coastal communities in the Arctic and elsewhere use other methods.

Three IWC members, Japan, Norway and Iceland, continue to kill whales in accordance with the commission's rules.

Sea conditions may make a good aim impossible

Japan and Iceland kill them for what they say is scientific research,

allowed by the IWC; Norway is not bound by the moratorium because it voted against it.

The IWC was established in 1946 to conserve whaling, and also to conserve whales. It holds periodic workshops on humane killing methods, but given the deep splits in its membership between supporters and opponents of whaling, agreement is elusive. Dr Nicola Grandy, the IWC secretary, told BBC News Online: "Our competence to address the issue of humane killing is questioned by some members.

"All member governments take it seriously, but there are different views on whether whaling is inhumane and should be stopped.

"The Norwegians, for example, do kill a high percentage of their whales instantaneously."

Whalewatch says Norway reported around 20% of whales failed to die instantaneously in 2002/3, and that Japan reported almost 60% were not killed outright.

Enough reason to stop
It says the average estimated time to death is more than two minutes, and that some whales take over an hour to die.

It is also concerned at the use of rifles and other ways to despatch whales which have survived being harpooned.

Norway makes its harpooners take annual tests
It says criteria for assessing the time it takes a whale to die are unreliable, with some animals possibly surviving long after they are judged to be dead.

Whalewatch concludes: "On grounds of animal welfare alone, all whaling operations should be halted."

John Opdahl of the Norwegian Embassy in London told BBC News Online: "For many years, the IWC has given high priority to efforts to improve whaling methods in order to minimize unnecessary, protracted suffering, and Norway has always led the way in these efforts.

"The methods now used in minke whaling are as good as or better than those in other forms of big-game hunting as regards both death times and the percentage of whales that are merely injured."

Sir David's foreword quotes Dr Harry Lillie, a ship's physician on an Antarctic whaling trip in the 1940s.

Dr Lillie wrote: "If we can imagine a horse having two or three explosive spears stuck in its stomach and being made to pull a butcher's truck through the streets of London while it pours blood into the gutter, we shall have an idea of the method of killing. "The gunners themselves admit that if whales could scream the industry would stop, for nobody would be able to stand it."

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/3542987.stm>
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