

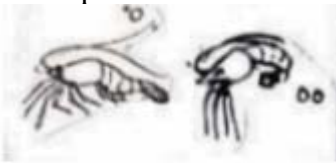
THE SHELLFISH NETWORK
NEWSLETTER, Autumn, 2003



NO 29

Springside, Forest Road, East Horsley
 Surrey KT24 5AZ
 Tel/Fax: 01483 282 995
 e-mail: springside@connectfree.co.uk

Aims: 1) To increase public awareness of the fact that shellfish are living creatures capable of experiencing pain and stress. 2) To stop the cruelty involved in, and eventually to bring an end to, the slaughter of shellfish for human consumption and other abuses.



You have 'phoned me, e-mailed me, sent me articles by 'snail-mail' and donated generous sums – thanks and thanks again. Nothing could happen without you all! And – great news – Makro have stopped selling live lobsters. Between us and Animal Aid we have won! For those of you who can get there, there is to be a World Vegan Day at Brentwood, Essex on 1st November, 4pm until late. 01277 200300 for info or to book tickets. £5.50 per person inc. free samples of beer and wine, talks and lots else. London Vegans are also having a Day, 020 8806 6347. (National Vegan Week, Oct. 26 to Nov. 2)

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LOBSTERS

While yet another rare albino lobster was spared the cooking pot and is to be kept alive by Angus Campbell and his crew, the Western Isles Fishermen's Association has launched a project to release 300 lobsters either side of the Eriskay Causeway. This, however, is to ensure

that increasing stocks are available in the future. (*Source: Aberdeen Press & Journal, 21.8.03*) and thanks to Stephen for pointing this story out.

+And in *The Times, 17.7.03*, a 30 year old giant lobster, named Claude, has been put on display in an aquarium in Brixham, South Devon. Claude is 1m long and weighs 5.3kg.

+An article in *The Post-Standard (Syracuse, NY)* 18 July by Monica Engebretson is a reply to a letter to the paper from Mary Ellen Burris of Wegmans (a restaurant). Burris implied that lobsters cannot feel pain. Engebretson points out that the prevailing scientific view is that 'lobsters indeed have cognizant pain experiences similar to mammals' and that 'pain is a biological necessity for living animals'.

She goes on to say that since lobsters are relatively slow-growing and reproduce late in life, 'these factors further support the assumption that lobsters have evolved a pain mechanism to avoid untimely demise'. Monica Engebretson is Senior program co-ordinator, Animal Protection Institute, Sacramento. US.

+The white-clawed crayfish, once widespread across Europe, may become extinct in the UK, according to *UKWildnews, 6.9.03*. The river Witham is the only remaining white-clawed crayfish site in Lincolnshire. As I reported in past newsletters, its survival is under threat from the more aggressive American signal crayfish which was introduced and farmed as a culinary delicacy and then, inevitably, escaped. (Yet another example of human greed causing havoc in the countryside! Ed.)

+And from Planet Ark: American Lobsters Wanted dead or alive - \$140 bounty. A Norwegian aquarium has offered a \$140 bounty for American lobsters to prevent a crustacean invasion. The lobsters probably escaped from cages after they were imported live from Maine and placed in shallow waters to keep them fresh before boiling. (*Source: Reuters, 13/8/03*)



COCKLES, WHELKS, ETC

'What a plucky little creature is the cockle. Having survived government bans, health scares and gastronomic prejudice, it is

gradually regaining status as one of Britain's finest foods. We must all champion the plump and tasty bivalve that thrives on our shorelines'. So says Christopher Hirst in *The Independent Review*, 5.9.03. However, bans imposed by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) (info from Rosie, thanks) on many English and Welsh cockle beds following the alleged detection of dangerous levels of toxins in the shellfish had Essex cockle fishermen marching on Downing Street in protest. Immediately after the protest, the bans were lifted! Andrew Ratley of Kershaw's Quality Foods says 'Our industry has been brought to its knees by the total incompetence of the FSA and the laboratory it employs'. The cocklemen claim that inadequate testing procedures produced atypical results. When unaffected by bans, the industry normally dredges up 19,000 tonnes a year and this can rise to as high as 40,000 tonnes. But the British eat very few of the tiny creatures. They go mostly to Holland and Spain. And in August, (*Ind.* 9.8.03) a raid on hundreds of cockle pickers was carried out on a Merseyside beach. A total of 206 officers took part in 'Operation Omega', including 96 from the Dept. of Works and Pensions, 75 from Merseyside Police and 10 from north Wales police. They were supported by six police horses, four dogs and a helicopter (and where was Uncle Tom Cobbley?), all to investigate 400 cocklers, 80 of whom were found to be working illegally while claiming benefit. Mr Wicks, Minister of State for Work and Pensions, said 'It's a big industry. On these beaches we have got cockles to the value of up to half a million pounds at any one time and lorries there to export them to Spain and other places.' It seems the main concern is that some of the pickers may have been illegal immigrants. (I'm sure the taxpayers were overjoyed that all those officers were on their toes – especially since there were no arrests! Like the cockles, take care when you are on the beach, especially if you live in a shell or are claiming benefit. Ed.)



'Innovative designs for buildings ranging from a pier-end pavilion to a whelk stall are helping

to revive Britain's seaside towns, researchers say'. Jon Rouse, chief executive of Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (Cabe) said; 'This report demonstrates how seaside towns need to recapture the design excellence and innovation of our Victorian forebears...' (*Source: Ind.* 10.7.03)

+And talking about design excellence – an article in *The Ind. Review*, 9.7.03, explains how mollusc shells are formed. 'The shell is formed by the mantle, a thin sheet of tissue covering the body of the mollusc. Specific cells in the mantle produce a matrix that quickly becomes mineralised with calcium carbonate. This is what makes the shell hard. The rate at which the shell is formed and its thickness will be controlled by physiological (internal) and environmental (external) factors. The mantle will continue to secrete matrix until the mollusc and its shell are fully grown...any cracks can be repaired within a few days.'



OYSTERS, MUSSELS AND SHRIMP

Salmon farmers are cultivating edible seaweed, which grows well beside salmon cages.

Apparently it tastes 'fantastic, just like an oyster and is suitable for vegetarians', according to Nick Joy, managing director of Loch Duart. (So nobody need eat oysters ever again! Ed) (*Source: Ind.* 4.7.03)

+So – the tough times for Brittany oyster farmers look as though they are at an end. Since the Prestige oil tanker disaster the producers have been struggling, and although Balzac used to eat 100 oysters a day, young people 'find it easier to open a tin of foie gras', according to Yvon Madec, oyster producer in Aber Benoit. (*Source: FT*, 12,13.7.03) (Now all they need to do is grow seaweed! Ed.)

+Ecologists at Royal Holloway, Univ. of London, say that a chemical pollutant widespread in the environment, nonylphenol, is affecting oysters and could affect other marine life. It is causing oysters to develop into hermaphrodites, which cannot breed. The chemical is an 'endocrine disruptor' it can mimic hormones and disrupt normal sexual development and has caused death and

abnormalities in developing embryos and larvae in a commercial Pacific oyster hatchery in Whitstable, Kent. The substance is a breakdown of spermicides, cosmetics and detergents and is widespread in the aquatic environment. (Source: *Anna and FT*, 11.8.03)
 +According to *NFU Countryside – Rural News Archive*, 22.4.03, Scientists are on the verge of creating an ‘introduction agency’ for ageing shellfish. Adult freshwater pearl mussels in England and Wales don’t get about much and as a result, the youngest mussels are now middle-aged. Thousands live solitary lives in empty beds. The Environment Agency (EA) and English Nature are looking at plans to relocate isolated individuals to help them to socialise. Anne Lewis of the EA said: ‘The Agency has a responsibility to protect this species as part of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan – a strategy to conserve, enhance and work with nature and ecosystems rather than against them...’ David Fraser of English Nature said: ‘We don’t fully know why freshwater pearl mussels are not breeding, but illegal pearl fishing and reduced water quality are probably important factors.’ Julius Caesar loved these pearls, as did the Elizabethans. Each female mussel will produce around 3 million eggs a year. Only 0.01% will survive. The larvae, called glochidia, attach themselves to the gills of young fish that carry them upstream. After a few months they form shells and drop from the fish. It is a criminal offence to disturb them.
 +A report released in July by the Environment Justice Foundation (EJF) highlights human rights abuses in the developing world, including land seizure, rape and child labour, forced labour and murder as a result of the West’s demand for farmed shrimps. You can see the report and petition at www.ejfoundation.org. (Source: *the Vegan*, Autumn 03).



CRAB

Environment experts are trawling the bottom of the harbour in Dover to check on the creatures living there. So far they have identified 120 different species, which shows that the water

quality is high, despite the growing number of ships using the port. Crabs and the other creatures are helping to monitor the pollution levels, and any sudden changes in these inhabitants of the seabed would suggest water pollution. (Source: *Ceefax*, thanks to Stephen, 28.8.03)

+In an article in *The Times*, 24.5.03, Colin Pressdee describes the actions of the crabbers in the Atlantic. He says, ‘...the winch begins to heave the line of fishing pots from their gloomy depth. The first pot tumbles over the shining steel roller on the gunwales to be dumped with an emphatic thump on to the sorting table.’ The fleet has about 100 large crabbers and each may operate up to 12,000 pots, usually set in strings of 50. They will catch around 26,000 tonnes annually (mostly the brown crab), compared with 1,240 tonnes of lobster. In the lobster pot is a freshly laid bunch of cuttlefish eggs and inside, many creatures are moving. The crabs cling to the inside of the pot with their legs and claws. Each crab is stabbed in the pincher joint with a short knife to sever the sinew, rendering the claw harmless. ‘You have to be very careful, as a pinch from a large crab can be painful,’ says one of the crew, ‘and they hang on relentlessly’. (Well, gosh! How shocking of the creatures to hang on for dear life! Don’t they know that they are depriving humans of a culinary delicacy? Ed.)

+But Philippa Davenport in *The FT*, 28/29.6.03, reckons that although crab is messy, it is ‘fun to prepare and eat.’ (Let’s hope the crab finds it fun to have its two nerve centres mashed up and then be boiled. Ed.)



POLLUTION

+Highland fishermen want to establish a liaison committee with the windfarm industry to help to avoid potential conflicts when the expansion of offshore windfarms comes to coastal waters in Scotland. There is at present concern over shellfish and the safety of trawlermen. (Source: *P & J* 12.5.03)

+An iceberg more than four times the size of Greater London is damaging the coast of Antarctica by blocking sunlight to a huge

expanse of ocean, say Nasa scientists. The iceberg is almost 20 miles wide and 124 miles long and has created a build-up of sea ice that has killed the tiny marine phytoplankton which are a key element in the Antarctic food chain. The breaking up, or 'calving' of the ice shelves is almost certainly due to global warming, say the scientists. (Source: *Ind.* 2.10.03)

+Nutritionists have labelled as 'totally irresponsible' the Sea fish Industry Authority Seafood Week's focus to get young people to eat fish. The Consumer's Association report 'FISH what's the catch?' Oct.2002, says, 'If you eat more than one portion of oily fish a week, you're more likely to exceed the tolerable daily intake (TDI) for dioxins and PCBs'. The Seafood Week Press Pack, Oct. 03, encourages young people to eat oil-rich fish two to three times a week to reduce the risk of a heart attack. (Source: *Herma, evu-secretariat.* 1.10.03)

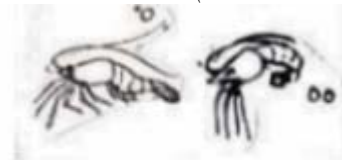
+Labour Animal Welfare Society (LAWS), warns against balloon releases. It is believed that semi-inflated balloons that land in the seas are easily mistaken for jellyfish by marine animals, in particular the loggerhead and leatherback turtles, whose primary food is the jellyfish. All seven species of marine turtles are near extinction. Not only the balloons, but in many cases the attached ribbons cause severe problems with entanglement. Many states in Canada and the USA have now abandoned the practice of mass balloon releases. (Thanks to everyone who sent info).

+A report in *Nature* magazine (no date) said that a growing list of 'fisheries' have collapsed and many coral reefs have been severely damaged or destroyed over the past 50 years.

+An insatiable demand for live fish in Hong Kong restaurants is leading to the devastation of coral reefs in the Philippines. In *The Ind. Review*, 24.9.03, Fred Pearce reported on the terrible rise of cyanide fishing. Take tablets of sodium cyanide, mix with water in a plastic bottle, find your fish and squirt. The mixture will stun the fish without killing it. Thousands of Philippine fishermen are doing it every day. But the lingering cyanide in the water kills the coral and the algae on which the fish feed. Biologist Sam Mamauag of the International

Marinelife Alliance in Manila estimates that every fish caught this way destroys a square meter of reef.

+Due to the last 50 years system of commercial whaling, a devastating chain reaction has been created. Killer whales feed on great whales. Between 1949 and 1969, an estimated 1.8m tons of whale biomass were taken, and altogether at least half a million great whales were removed from the north Pacific Ocean and north Bering Sea during this period, according to researchers. It seems that the killer whales turned to the smaller marine mammals, and this led to the disappearance of the sea otters. In turn there was a boom in their usual food, the sea urchins, which overgrazed the Alaskan kelp beds. Researchers said, 'Commercial whaling in the north Pacific Ocean set off one of the longest and most complex ecological chain reactions ever described. (Source: *Ind.* 23.9.03)



+UK: shellfish waters identified as sensitive areas. An additional 47 estuarine and coastal waters have been designated as Sensitive Areas under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive. They are all also designated Shellfish Waters under the Shellfish Waters Directive. (Source: *UK Wild News.* 8.9.03)

+Thousands of cold-blooded invertebrates could become extinct if computer models run by the British Antarctic Survey proved to be correct. When the temperature of the habitat water was raised in line with predictions from climatologists, every organism died. (Source: *Animal Action, Summer 03*)

+Overfishing and pollution kill 80% of coral on Caribbean reefs. (Source: *Ind.* 18.7.03)

+Shockwaves from scientific tests carried out by the Spanish navy have killed four giant squid, one 12 metres long, off the northern Asturias coast. The giant squid is the world's largest invertebrate and lives at depths of up to 12,000 metres (6,500ft) (Source: *Ind.* 19.9.03)

+Whales found beached in the Canaries in 2002 may have suffered 'the bends' after being

startled by navy sonar exercises. The whales who dive to great depths normally take many minutes to surface, slowly allowing dissolved gases in their bloodstream to be released into the lungs. The exercises may interfere with this. Another possibility is that sound waves from sonar interfere with the way diving sea mammals store the dissolved gases. (Source: *Ind. 9.10.03*)

+Marine biologist Sara Lourie, a member of the UBC-based Project Seahorse marine conservation team, has identified the world's smallest known species of seahorse. They are typically just 16mm long. This pygmy seahorse is known as *Hippocampus denise*. (Source: *UKWild news. 8.9.03*)

SHELLFISH INDUSTRY

The scallop industry has been given a boost with an indication from the Scottish Executive that it would be willing to fund new research into shellfish poison in scallops, because of the many long term closures of the fishery over the past five years. (This is not, you understand, concern for the scallops! Ed.) (Source: *P & J 9.5.03*)

+ But the Scallop Association has strongly rejected the need for new scallop conservation measures announced by the Scottish Executive. The plans include dredging restrictions and the introduction of a bycatch limit of 20% for king scallops in the queen scallop fishery. (Source: *P & J 10.7.03*)

+And prawn fishermen are facing more problems with low prices as good weather resulted in increased fishing and a glut. (Ahh!) (Source: *P & J 6.5.03*)

+Also the prawn fishermen could be next to feel the impact of hard-hitting EU measures to preserve dwindling cod stocks. Scientists advising on a long-term cod recovery plan are assessing the effect prawn and other nephrops (molluscs) have on the species. Scottish fishing industry leaders fear the worst. (Now they know what the cod feels like! Ed.) (Source: *P & J 23.8.03*)



+Consumers will now be given more information about seafood, thanks to new rules on the labelling of fish and shellfish sold in the UK. These will include method of production (sic) such as caught at sea, in freshwater, farmed or cultivated. (Source: *P & J 22.7.03*)
 + Fishermen in the Western Isles could see live shellfish being airlifted out of Stornaway to reach markets in Spain in three hours. The proposals also offer the potential to open up new markets for live and fresh shellfish in the Far East and the US. (Source: *P & J 17.6.03*)
 +And finally – Sygen, the pig breeder, that has diversified into genetically modified shrimps, is reshuffling its board and shifting its headquarters from the US to the UK. (No source info.)

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Sadly, yet another new 'product' has been released on to the markets, known as 'Biospheres'. They consist of small spheres containing freshwater amphipod shrimp, snails, algae and micro-algae. The description says 'now you can keep a part of the planet as perfect as it should be – and they make a fascinating distraction for anyone stressed out at work'. The manufacturers state that they never have to be fed or cleaned out. They are being sold via novelty gift shops including Athena and 'I Want One of Those'. The RSPCA has expressed concern. Please write and complain politely to the retailers: Mr Dave Booth, Managing Director, I Want One of Those, PO Box 26953, LONDON SE21 8WL. and to Mr A B Naik, Athena didcot Ltd, 68 Middle Street, Brighton BN1 1AL. Explain that these are living creatures and should not be treated as novelty objects. Also, the water could easily turn toxic from build-up in the water. Please forward any replies to Animal Aid, The Old chapel, Bradford Street, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 1AW UK. (Thanks again to Anna, 9.7.03) In their letter to me, the RSPCA gave me their comments to Globus, who, I believe are also distributors: 'when someone is considering the purchase of animals, the Society believes that person should carefully consider the long-term commitment and responsibility to provide for all the animal's needs'.

FISH

Far from having a memory span of only a few seconds, as is commonly believed, goldfish can remember things for at least three months.

They can also be trained to push levers at a certain time of day to get food, which puts them on a par with birds and small mammals. These findings were made by researchers at Plymouth University. (Well, well, whoever would have thought that non-human species can **think!** Ed.) But, of course, humans being the 'roof and crown of things' (Tennyson, a bit tongue in cheek I believe) suggest that the discovery has implications for communities in developing countries which depend (sic) on marine life for food. 'Hopefully it would be a more efficient way of harvesting fish than the way it is done now, especially for poorer people,' said Dr Gee the psychologist who worked on the research. (Source: *D. Mail* 1.10.03)

+And supporting this, fish are socially intelligent creatures who do not deserve their reputation as the dim-wits of the animal kingdom, according to a group of leading scientists. Fish are cunning, manipulative and even cultured. (Thanks to Herma for this. 7.9.03)

+ Also in the 6 Sept. *New Scientist*, Jeannie sent this : Trout treated with morphine have added to evidence that fish feel pain. The drugged fish showed less visible distress than undrugged ones when their lips were injected with an acid, suggesting the morphine is deadening pain.

+ A cat used to trap caviar smugglers has been run over by a suspected contract killer. Ruski sniffed out hidden sturgeon fish, which contain the delicacy, at a checkpoint on Russia's Caspian Sea. (Source: *Mirror* 14.7.03)

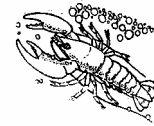
+Scientists have created the ultimate pet: a genetically modified fish that glows in the dark. And scientists believe Night Pearl bio-fish represent the shape of pets to come. They were created by HJ Tsai, a professor at National Taiwan University. (Source: *Observer* 15.6.03) Many thanks to all who sent that info.

+By the way, look out for 'magic shells' which you drop in your fish tank It turns out they are real sea coral. We don't know where the coral is from, so some detective work is necessary! Thanks Rachel.

+Angler Andrew wood, 38 plans to visit 37 rivers, 16 lakes and 2 canals and catch every species of fish in Britain. (Source: *Mirror*, 22.6.03)

+Fishermen hauled in a 20ft great white shark off the coast of Croatia. The shark weighed two tons and was caught in nets cast for tuna. A witness said 'It was alive when they got it up, but died before they brought it to shore...' The fishermen cut up the shark and threw the meat back into the sea as it has no commercial value. (Source: *Daily Mirror*, 18.7.03)

+Stocks of cod and hake in the North Sea face being 'totally wiped out', Parliament has warned. (Source: *Mirror*, 5.6.03)



A Far Off Sea

So far the far seas on the muddy shores
Who can guess the importance and pause
For those travellers, dwellers or their cause
On the Yellow Sea shores, even in the
important clause.

Birds here landed the long-flighted shore
Birds in many, many miles; fish and shellfish
more
With invertebrates restore
Lands yet ours and respected in lore.

So many now do not own their earth
And there is still sorrow around its girth
Each small shellfish is of known worth
In seas bordering, only to others less than
mirth.

John Amsden

Against the Saemangeum Reclamation Project for a sea wall for agriculture in the important mudflats. (Isle of Wight – if you wish to write a letter of complaint please contact me. Julie)

There are many more horror stories of sea creatures being maltreated. Just not enough space to cover all human injustice to others!

