

THE SHELLFISH NETWORK
NEWSLETTER, Winter, 2003/4



NO 30

Springside, Forest Road, East Horsley
Surrey KT24 5AZ
Tel/Fax: 01483 282 995
e-mail: info@shellfishnetwork.org.uk
www.shellfishnetwork.org.uk



**HAPPY NEW YEAR TO
YOU ALL**

Great News! As you can see, we have a brand new website and e-mail address. Tons of thanks go to Debbie for organising this. There is plenty to see on the website, although some of it is under construction still. Do look at it – it is really good. Also DEFRA (Department of Food etc.) is in the process of putting our info. on to their website! A great step forward.



And, once again, a **BIG** thank you to all of you for your kind messages, cards, cuttings and wonderful donations.

LOBSTERS

On 11 October the Independent Magazine ran an extensive article on the chef Gordon Ramsay. I shall quote just part of a particular passage and leave you to judge what kind of man he is:

‘You always feel better after killing something. I do. Whenever I get pissed off with the cooks now, you can’t push them or hit them or kick them or slap

them around, like you could 10 years ago, so what do you do? **** it, you stab the head off a lobster. You feel all the better for it. And it stops women being squeamish. God knows how many I’ve killed. We used to plunge them into boiling *court bouillon*, and their tails flip up and they scream and you can hear their claws scraping on the sides, and I got great pleasure out of that. I don’t want any animal rights protestors outside my door. I’ve had it with foie gras protestors and the Vegetarian Society of Great Britain. They follow me around...If I’m in a hotel, I go up to the top floor, get a duck-down quilt or pillow and sprinkle feathers all over them.’ Following this article, an Independent reader pointed out in a letter, (14.10.03) that he had once read that a complete lack of empathy is one of the characteristics of a psychopath.

+++++

The Lambholm lobster hatchery is Europe’s largest and the only centre of its kind operating in the UK. Staff are confident that further investment would allow them to set annual release targets of between 150,000 and 200,000 juveniles. This will enhance the role the hatchery plays in restocking a fishery that has seen a serious decline in catches in recent years. (So, overfish and then hatch lots of babies to go through the whole process again! Ed.) *Source: Aberdeen Press & Journal, 8.9.03.*

+++++

Lachie, the white lobster, ‘is now at home in a large tank, along with a couple of cod for company and it is already feeding quite happily’, according to an oceanographer and marine biologist, Ross Campbell. *Source: P & J 18.9.03*

+++++

It seems that fluoxetine, commonly known as Prozac, has been researched on many creatures. Here are some results: Lobsters retreating on Prozac. ‘Serotonin and aggressive motivation in crustaceans: altering the decision to retreat’; R. Huber,

et al, Proceedings of the National Academies of Science 1997.

Worms moving on Prozac. 'the effects of cholinergic and serotonergic drugs on motility in vitro of *Haplometra cylindracea*' D.M. McKay, et al, Parasitology, 1989.

Prozac given to clams. Two things happened. First, the clams began reproducing at about 10 times their normal rate. Second, Professor Peter Fong of Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania was awarded the 1998 Ig Nobel Biology Prize, honouring him, his Prozac, and his happy shellfish. *Source: Guardian, 25.11.03* (Thanks to Arcnews, December 03 for that.)



MUSSELS, WINKLES AND OYSTERS

A delegation of mussel farmers and representatives from Shetland Development Trust and Shetland Islands Council went on a 'familiarisation visit' to cork in south-west Ireland. This trip was to investigate a county with a similar rural environment and method of mussel culture to Shetland. 'The information gathered will be used to establish a benchmark for Shetland', said Shetland Development Trust's project manager. (I'm sure the mussels will be thrilled to be a benchmark. What a story to tell their offspring...Ed.) *Source: P & J 17.10.03*

+++++

Twelve kilos of winkles, shipped in especially from Shetland, were devoured by three teams taking part in the first ever winkle eating contest in a Perth pub. The winners took 1hr 15mins and 16secs to finish their four kilos between them. *Source: P & J 6.10.03*

+++++

The Falmouth Oyster Festival marks the start of oyster harvesting in October. These native bivalves are dredged by sail boats and haul an' tow punts, a method that hasn't changed for 100 years. Last year 10,000 were eaten at the festival. *Source: Independent Review, 18.10.03*



PRAWNS, SCALLOPS ETC

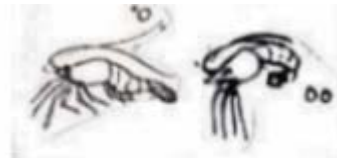
In September of 03, Scotland's west coast ports reported poor prawn fishing, possibly due to heavy fishing in the Spring. Only the prawn creelers landing live prawns were doing well. *Source: P & J 6.9.03*

+ And also in September, curbs on scallop fishers caused them to lambast Labour and Liberal MSPs for 'treachery' after backing a conservation measure which critics claim could cost hundreds of fishing and processing jobs. But Deputy Rural Development Minister Allan Wilson argued that the measures would safeguard the industry's future. *Source: P & J 11.9.03*

+ Newly-qualified diver Jim Bain died after stopping to gather scallops for tea after his air supply had reached warning levels. The weight of the shellfish in a bag round his waist may have made him work harder as he swam to the surface and used up extra air. *Source: P & J 23.9.03*

+ The Scottish Shellfish Marketing Group (SSMG) has appointed Willie Fergusson its new chief executive. Mr Fergusson said: 'SSMG has superb products (sic) that are in great demand, and I see an exciting future for both the raw material and the shellfish-in-sauce range'. (Not *such* an exciting future for the shellfish. Ed.) *Source: P & J 10.9.03*

+ Farmed shellfish production in Scotland rose by 6% in 03, according to an industry survey. The key findings were that overall production increased from 3,350 tonnes to 3,558 tonnes. Shellfish farms employed 128 full-time and 219 part-time workers. *Source: P & J 25.10.03*



THE FRAGILE OCEAN

The meadows of the sea, seagrasses that hug many of the world's coast lines, are refuge for some of the world's most endangered marine species; dugongs and manatees, green turtles and seahorses. But a survey has revealed that 15% of this unique marine ecosystem has been lost in the past decade. Seagrass beds are being destroyed by nutrient enrichment from human sewage, intensive fishing and even by yachting and jet-skiing, say the editors of the *World Atlas of Seagrasses*.

Professor Fred Short of the University of New Hampshire, said, 'Like coral reefs, seagrasses are at a critical juncture, heavily impacted by human activities and climate change.' The Atlas suggests that seagrass meadows should be considered one of the most important marine ecosystems for humans, playing a vital role in fisheries, protecting coral reefs by binding sediments, cleaning coastal waters and providing coastal defence from erosion. They are vital habitats for sirenians – dugongs and manatees, the odd-looking sea cows which were once mistaken for mermaids. Two species of seahorse, the long-snouted and the short-snouted, are occasionally seen in British seagrass beds, along with shellfish, cuttlefish, pipefish and sea bream.

Source: Ind. 15.10.03

+++++

'An unseen 'forest' of microscopic beings fills the upper 200 meters of ocean, exerting an influence on this planet every bit as profound as the forests on land. The diverse phytoplankton species inhabiting the ocean's surface waters, which mainly consist of single-celled cyanobacteria, diatoms and other kinds of algae, form the base of the marine food web.' Sallie W. Chisholm, biologic oceanographer, says that these tiniest inhabitants of the ocean, hold the key to understanding the biosphere and what happens when humans disturb it. These creatures account for roughly half the photosyntheses on the earth, remove

nearly as much carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as all land plants and supply about half the oxygen we breathe. Some cyanobacteria were the planet's first oxygen-producing creatures and are, in a broad sense, the ancestors of all higher plants. Chisholm is irritated by claims the *Prochlorococcus* can be genetically engineered to draw down more carbon, thereby making it 'useful' to humans. 'These guys are already useful to humans,' she says. 'They're out there doing their job in planetary maintenance, helping to regulate the biogeochemical cycles of the biosphere.' *Source: Scientific American, Dec. 03.*

+++++

A tiny fossil of a creature that lived some 425 million years ago has entered the record books as the oldest unequivocally male animal. The organism resembles a cross between a shrimp and a clam and David Siveter, professor of palaeontology at Leicester University, said there was no doubt the fossilised creature was a male, making it the oldest unambiguous member of its sex. *Source: Ind. 5.12.03*



Thanks to a £5m oxygenation scheme to clean the polluted Manchester Ship Canal, the number of species not seen for years until now has risen to more than 30, including the freshwater shrimp. *Source: the Guardian, 25.11.03*

+ According to Thomas Ebert, a marine biologist at Oregon state University, the red sea urchin can live for 200 years. They live in shallow waters off America's west coast. The study found the urchin grew at a steady rate independent of changes in the marine habitat. They can die from attacks by predators, specific diseases or being harvested by fishermen, but otherwise seem practically 'immortal' according to Prof. Ebert. *Source: Ind. 25.11.03*

During half-term week last October, the Blue Reef Aquarium on Southsea seafront

held a Sea Monsters Week. Among 'monsters' on display was the world's largest octopus species. (I wonder what the octopus thinks of the strange creatures with only four tentacles, walking on two of them and emitting extraordinary noises? Ed.) *Source: The Journal Series, 23.10.03*



POLLUTION ETC.

The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has issued a proposal for a Council Regulation as regards the protection of deep-water coral reefs from the effects of trawling in an area north west of Scotland. The area of the sea bed, commonly known as the Darwin Mounds, has been identified by the Joint Nature conservation Committee as the best example of a cold water reef known in UK waters.

+ Canterbury taxpayers could be left footing the bill for legal action taken by Whitstable fishermen. The local shellfish processors are welcoming news of a possible judicial review into the way beds are closed for harvesting because of toxins. Thanks to Rosie & Géra for that.

+ The shellfish industry now faces stricter EC rules to be introduced to improve the environment and to protect consumers from amnesic shellfish poisoning. *Source: P & J 18.9.03*

+Recent controversy over the US Food and Drug Administration's mishandling of mercury warnings in tuna only further strengthens the urgent need for the state of California to adequately warn consumers of the dangers of mercury-contaminated seafood. 237 scientific studies have demonstrated that mercury can cause a range of health problems. Mercury poisoning symptoms include muscle aches, tremor, hair and memory loss, numbness and nausea. *Source: Sea Turtle restoration Project. And the*

Vegetarian & Vegan Foundation supports these findings. The Foundation's scientific report shows that plant, rather than fish, oils offer the best protection for health. All the world's oceans are on the point of environmental collapse because of overfishing and yet the public is still encouraged to eat oily fish to be healthy. Not only is this irresponsible, it is untrue. *Oct. 03.* (Further info. from V.V.F. 8 York Court, Wilder Street, Bristol BS2 8QH)

+ DEFRA are to have discussions under the Common Fisheries Policy in 04 of a management plan for scallops, lobsters and crabs in the English Channel. These will include fishing effort limitations for these stocks.



FISH

Following the popularity of the recent Disney film, 'Finding Nemo', there has been a reported rise in the sale of tropical fish. Yet the film's underlying message is that 'even fish suffer in captivity'. The increased demand will lead to even more tropical fish being taken from the wild into the pet trade. People with little or no experience in keeping these creatures can lead to the fish being flushed live down the toilet by children – in order to 'free' them- as happens in the film, without realising that this will cause more suffering and will kill them. Advocates for Animals is launching a campaign called Glass Prisons, Empty Lives 1 to create awareness of the problems of keeping tropical fish in captivity.

ross@advocatesforanimals.org
0131 225 6039)

+Keith Elliott reckons that Christmas for him means fishing, fishing and fishing. 'Up at dawn, maybe a break for a spot of lunch about midday, then off to fish again until dusk' (Strange way to celebrate the birthday of the Prince of Peace! Ed.) *Source: Ind. On Sunday, 7.12.03.*

+ organic salmon is set to rise in price and become even more of a luxury (sic) because of a tightening of regulations amid fears that organic fish farms cause ecological damage. *Source: Ind. On Sunday, 7.12.03.*

+ John Wilson of *Sunday Express*, 26.10.03, reckons that to catch perch you need to present a gudgeon or small dace or perch livebait beneath a float.

‘...success can sometimes be instant – within mere seconds of gently casting the bait out. But you need to be stealthy, for if the perch hear your footfalls, they’ll leave well alone...’ (Well, we know what to do on a grand day out by still waters, lakes and gravel pits! Ed.)

+ Colin Elliott is the new holder of Milemead Coarse Fishery’s Lake Record for Mirror Carp. He achieved it with a hot dog sausage. And Damian Watts caught a ballan wrasse on Plymouth’s Barbican, not known for large fish. He is pictured in Plymouth’s *Sunday Independent*, 26.10.03. The beautiful creature weighed 7lbs 11ozs. I don’t know what Damian Watts weighs. Ed.

+ *Portsmouth News*, 8.9.03, reported that embarrassed officials are investigating how a stallholder was able to hand out goldfish at a council-run firework fair – breaking a city-wide ban on giving them away as prizes. The RSPCA opposes goldfish being used as prizes.

+ Naturewatch News 2003 discusses the ‘murky waters’ of intensive fish farming. They say that fish resting on cold marble slabs in our supermarkets deserve more sinister metaphors than ‘fresh’ and ‘quality’. ‘How about de-sexed or dyed flesh to start. The main course can include toxic chemicals, antibiotics and dioxins. Yummy!’ and in *People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) Times*, Summer 03, Sylvia Earle says ‘the magazine that I read on my flight to Mehamn had an article about the fishing industry in Norway, boasting about how it uses all parts of the cod. On the boat I was on, the head and viscera – about half

of the dead animal – were thrown overboard...Every year, commercial fishers dump more than 20 million tons of nontargeted fish alone – most of them dead or dying – back into the oceans; that’s one-fourth of all the fish caught worldwide.’ This, of course, is not to mention the other animals – turtles, sea birds, seals – who get caught in the boats’ massive nets.



+ An unprecedented census of the world’s oceans has revealed man’s dire ignorance of the most unexplored region of the planet. Five hundred species of fish have been identified since the project began three years ago, but scientists believe there are 10 times as many yet to be discovered. A total of 210,000 species of marine animals and plants are known to science but the true number could be closer to two million – and some are threatened with extinction before they are even named. *Source: Ind. 24.10.03*

+ There are increasing grounds for concern that the ‘art’ of fly-fishing is being destroyed by the disappearance of the very insects whose life the fishermen seek to impersonate at the end of a nylon line. A comprehensive survey of river fly populations across England and Wales has found that falling numbers of the aquatic insects on which game fish (sic) such as trout, grayling and salmon feed, have gone into steep decline. These include the Mayfly, the Caddis fly and the Stone fly. *Source: Ind. 1.11.03*

+ One last great effort is to be made to bring back the Thames salmon, the fish that disappeared for a century and a half. But doubts have arisen over whether breeding is now possible. *Source: Ind. 24.11.03*

+ And tough new powers to save the European eel from a catastrophic slump in numbers are to be introduced after experts warned that these eels are facing

extinction. The experts suspect the decline can be blamed on overfishing, pollution etc. *Source: Ind. On Sunday 30.11.03*

GENERAL

Once again we are trying to get the sale of Sea Monkeys stopped in toy departments. I have now taken this to our local Environmental Health Officer, and he is very enthusiastic about the campaign, but it seems that no-one has the power to prevent these sales. It is not illegal to sell the poor creatures. Contact me if you would like the address of your local Formative Fun Stores. Also selling them are Woolworths, Ottakars and various others. Perhaps we could organise demos?

+ PETA took a 7-foot anti-fishing mascot, Gill the Fish to Oslo to remind residents that fish feel fear and pain and suffer agonising deaths when they are dragged from their ocean homes. *Source: PETA mag.*

+ An endangered creature, found only in the cradle of Canada's national park system, is slowly reclaiming its mountain habitat after being driven nearly to extinction by human activity. The turning point came last November when Dwayne Lepitzki reintroduced the species to one of its former homes in Banff National Park. The biologist picked up a glass beaker and - 'sploosh' - poured 50 snails into a natural hot spring. 'Go forth and prosper' was what Lepitzki was thinking. The population has since ballooned to 6,000. A wonderful success story! Many thanks to Garry for that.



FOOOOD!

I often get asked for vegan recipes. There is seldom space in these pages for including them, in fact I have to be so selective already because you wonderful souls send me so much info. But here is a fantastic new book **Green Harvest** essential for every vegetarian and vegan

kitchen. It has been compiled by Jill Russell to be sold to benefit animal welfare organisation. At £4.99 it is a must! To order your copy, send a cheque to Naturewatch, 122 Bath Road, Cheltenham, Glos GL53 7JX. Tel: 01242 252 871.



The U.S. Navy has agreed to restrict the use of its newest sonar after a report connecting it to the formation of gas bubbles in beaked whales. The sonar may have scared the animals into surfacing too quickly, creating decompression sickness, or even triggered bubble formation directly. *Source: Nature, 9.10.03*



POETRY

Last seen
And least remembered
Least thought of
In sympathy extended

Most sought
In sweeping seething memories
Most viewed the gasping many
In sea scavenge or other victories

With no memorial
Ever seen or known in water vacant
With no headstone in the wavering
tosses
For such losses there is no account.

But at times
The agonies and blood rendered
In the silent rock or sands in life
surrendered
Can be remembered.

John Amsden