

THE SHELLFISH NETWORK
NEWSLETTER, Spring 2004



NO 31

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



I know that everyone shares with me great horror and sadness at the drowning of those nineteen Chinese folk while cockle picking in February. This is a tragedy that must never happen again. It only goes to show how little some people care for their human fellows and beggars belief that they could send them to such a dangerous place. Our thoughts are with their relatives and friends. Julie

+++++

Once again, tons of thanks to all of you who send in articles (with especial thanks to 'regular' senders!), inform me about radio and TV programmes and generally support the Network. Couldn't do it without you all! Not room for everything, but everything is of use for info.etc.

I know that you will all share my surprise and delight that the Scottish Executive has sent out proposals to Revise Existing Animal Welfare Legislation, and includes in its definition of 'animal': '...cephalopod, or

crustacean, kept by, owned by, managed or dependent on people'. "Managed or dependent" will not include the intermediate feeding of wild animals or the management of river fisheries, but would include fish farming. Do you agree with this definition? We have to reply by 2nd July. Do email me if you have any ideas and I will send them on. Ed.

CRABS



The Chinese Mitten Crab (*Eriocheir sinensis*): Mitten crabs spend most of their life in freshwater, but they must return to the sea to breed. Both males and females migrate downstream during their fourth or fifth year and attain sexual maturity in the tidal estuaries. Then, after mating, the females continue seaward. The crabs have been collected from the intake screens of Lots Road Power Station, Chelsea since 1990. It seems that population numbers of this crab in the Thames have increased in recent years, with potentially harmful environmental effects as they burrow into river banks. They can also cross dry land and may threaten our native crayfish population. (However, like most creatures, it will probably settle into its own niche if left alone! Ed.) In the Orient the mitten crab is eaten uncooked, which can present a health hazard as the crab is an intermediate host for the lung fluke, *Paragonimus westermanii*. (Source: *The Natural History Museum*, www.nhm.ac.uk/zoology/crab)

+ It seems that Cancer (the crab) is the sign of mother, nurture and family. (Source: *OFM July 02*)



LOBSTERS

According to *The Sunday Telegraph*, 7. 3. 04, Residents in the Italian town of Reggio

Emilia were outraged after its council adopted an animal rights bylaw that bans boiling live lobsters as 'useless torture'. Supporters said it gave animals equal rights to man, but local pet-owners described it as terrifying political correctness! One charming resident said '...how am I supposed to kill a lobster before cooking it? Hit it on the head?' (Didn't know you were 'supposed' to kill lobsters! Ed.) 22 Councillors voted in favour of the new law, and only one against. But according to Tiziano Bassoli, the spirit of the law is good, but in practical terms it's exaggerated and a bit of a mess. 'It looks like it's been cobbled together in an evening', he said. Mr Tiziano is a retired butcher and songbird breeder.

+ In 'Proceedings of the National Academies of Science, 1997', R. Huber, et al, there is an intriguing heading about lobsters retreating on Prozac: 'Serotonin and aggressive motivation in crustaceans: altering the decision to retreat'! (Haven't had time to look this up on the web yet. Ed.)



TOYS

Sadly, in spite of many of you writing to Woolworths, Formative Fun and the bookstore Ottakars, Sea Monkey kits are still being sold. Do keep up the letters of polite complaint. Ottakar's head office is: Rougemont House, Rougemont Close, Manor Road, Salisbury, Wilts SP1 1LY. Tel: 01722 428 500, Woolworths is: Woolworths PLC, Freepost NWW 58A, Rochdale Lancs OL11 3ZZ, Customer phone: 0845 608 1101, and Formative Fun Ltd, the Old School House, Gundry Lane, Bridport, Dorset DT6 3RL, Tel: 01297 489 880. Also, I have written to Marks & Spencer, Retail Customer Services, Chester Business Park, Wrexham Road, Chester CH4 9GA regarding their tasteless and upsetting cardboard stand of a young man holding up a large fish on a hook, advertising their Blue Harbour range for men. I have had a very positive reply from Janet Kershaw, Customer Adviser and perhaps a few more letters may not go amiss. Check your store first, though, to see if the advertisement is still

there. Telephone is: 0845 302 1234. One of our members had a not very positive letter back from HSBC Bank regarding their ad. using eels in a nasty way. If you find that ad. distasteful, write to HSBC Bank plc, Marketing Dept. Level 31, 8, Canada Sq., London E14 5HQ. And finally, does anyone know anything about the little coral shells being sold in a French catalogue? One of our members bought these 'magic shells', which she thought would be like the pretty oriental Water Flowers, made of paper. But she discovered they are in fact real sea coral, *Sertularia Cupressina*. Since coral is under threat, if you see any of these articles, please write to complain politely. Many thanks, and sorry to burden you with all this, but we can never stop our vigilance if we are ever to bring cruelty to an end! Ed.



ANIMAL BLESSING

There will be an Animal Blessing service at Craigiebuckler Church Hall, Springfield Road, Aberdeen on 13 June at 3pm. All animals with their human companions welcome.



COCKLES, MUSSELS AND ALL LITTLE ONES

+ West coast fishermen have blamed the Scottish Executive for bringing in scallop conservation rules which have served to increase pressure on stocks. (*Source: Aberdeen Press & Journal, 12. 12. 2003*) The legislation also places limits on the number of dredges that can be used and on the teeth and belly rings that can be used on scallop dredges in the Channel and the waters round Guernsey. (DEFRA)

+ Prawn fishermen have been warned that they will not be able to supplement their income through haddock bycatch any more. Under the new Brussels fishing deal, those fishing with a net mesh size under 100mm, which is the case with prawn nets, would not be allowed to catch haddock. (*Source: Aberdeen P & J 20. 1. 04*)

+A highland sea loch which became a battleground between trawlers and inshore boats fighting over prawn grounds has been acclaimed as a model for the industry worldwide. Loch Torridon made a big impression on a delegation of fishermen from Sweden, who want to create a viable long-term inshore fishery. Since a management agreement which gives local creel boats exclusive rights to a 50 sq.m. area, the value and quality of prawns have risen dramatically. All creels are fitted with hatches that allow prawns under a certain size to escape, thus improving long-term sustainability. (no, sorry folks, there's no abhh factor! Ed). Apparently this agreement has created a sense of community. Mr Wheatley, a former fisherman, said '...the inshore fishery [in Sweden] is vital for year-round employment. We're working towards securing the future of coastal communities so that they don't become ghost villages dominated by holiday homes...' (Source: *P & J* 30. 3. 04)

+A north-east fisherman has been fined £4,000 for having too few prawns in his nets when he went fishing last year, eight months before his twin rig trawler sank. He was found to have too large a mesh size, wrongly positioned square mesh panels, illegally attached strengthening bags and 'chafers' attached to the wrong side of his cod end. (don't ask! Ed.) Anyway, this meant that he was breaking strict rules designed to protect fish stocks in the North Sea. (Source: *P & J* 14. 11. 03)

+A couple who live in Switzerland have applied to open mussel farms on one of Scotland's most scenic sea lochs. If this is approved, the couple can expect a legal challenge by outraged residents around Loch Melfort's shores. The proposal could also threaten current locations of shell and fish farms across Scotland. John Christlieb, who owns Melfor Pier and a five-star holiday complex, is now fighting for a legal action and says 'I have never seen the likes of what is happening to the beautiful coastal waters of Scotland. Frankly, I think Scotland has gone completely bonkers in allowing the proliferation and expansion of these [fish]

farms.' (Perhaps this is a bit of NIMBY that is a good idea. Maybe the mussels put him up to it? Ed.) (Source: *Herald*, 7. 3. 04)



FARMING

Highlands and Islands shellfish farmers are joining forces with others around Europe to intensify their opposition to proposals by the European Commission requiring all farmed shellfish to be cleaned in treatment systems for five days at a constant temperature of 20° C. The Commission officials have highlighted the danger to human health posed by viruses which could be present and are demanding that every step is taken to eliminate these before the shellfish are sold. The farmers say this will kill off their markets. (!) Doug Mcleod, chairman of the Assn. of Scottish Shellfish Growers said, 'The European industry is united in its opposition to these rules because they threaten a viable and growing industry which has great potential benefits for remote rural areas of the Highlands and Islands.' (I should have thought that causing viral diseases will make them even more remote! Ed.) (Source: *P & J* 25. 3. 04)

+The recent news that farmed salmon from Scotland and the Faroe Islands contains a high concentration of lethal carcinogens, such as PCBs and dioxins, has caused mass panic. The report in *Science Journal* recommends that we should eat no more than one portion of farmed Scottish or Faroe Island salmon every four months, as consuming more would increase our chances of cancer. (Source: *Mail on Sunday*, 18. 1. 04) In fact, the Vegetarian & Vegan Foundation's latest scientific report debunks the myth that seafood is a healthfood! They can be contacted at 8, York Court, wilder St., Bristol BS2 8QH Tel: 0117 970 5190. *The Sunday Times*, 11. 1. 04 also ran the story, but, according to the Food Standards Agency, one portion a week outweighs any risk! (Source: *Daily Mirror*, 15. 1. 04) and the European Commission

argues that levels of harmful chemicals detected in a scientific study are within safe limits and do not exceed the maximum levels for safe consumption! (*Independent*, 13.1. 04) And yet the European Food Safety Authority's Scientific Panel on contaminants in the Food Chain (CONTAM) published an opinion regarding the possible risks to human health associated with the consumption of foods contaminated with mercury. Mercury is present as an environmental contaminant in foods, notably in fish and seafood principally in the form of methylmercury. The Panel advises that further dietary studies be conducted among vulnerable population groups, including children and women of childbearing age. According to *The Guardian*, 9. 1. 04, UK farmed fish are often fed from wild fish that have eaten even smaller prey living in the mud at the bottom of the North Sea, where some of the nastiest chemicals from the industrial and farming revolution have washed and settled. More info.can also be gained from The Vegetarian Society, Parkdale, Dunham Road, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 4QG, Tel: 0161 925 2000.



ENVIRONMENT

New rules to prevent the transportation of sea creatures around the world in ships' hulls are being drawn up at a conference which began on the 8th Feb. in London. An estimated 3,000 different species are dumped every day in ports thousands of miles from their habitats. An example is the Chinese Mitten Crab, (see above). The damage caused by creatures surviving in unnatural habitats can be far more lasting to wildlife than that from oil spills. (*Source: BBC CEEFAX* 8. 2. 04) +*Poecilozonites circumfirmatus* may have one of the longest names in the animal kingdom, but it is in fact a Bermudian land snail which measures only a few millimetres in length. 56 of them have been sent to London Zoo to save

them from extinction. (*Source: The Independent*, 6. 3. 04)

+Also in *The Independent*, 23. 2. 04, there is a warning that the warming of the Pacific threatens to wipe out coral on the Great Barrier Reef within 50 years. And it seems that the steep decline of the Pacific Ocean leatherback turtle, due to fishing practices and the poaching of the turtles' eggs, has gone so far that the species could be extinct within no more that a decade. (*Thanks to News Animal Net*, 26. 2. 04)

+And finally, on this subject, urgent action is needed to preserve the world's 'cloud forests', the lush mountain forests that harbour numerous endangered species, including the treefrog of Ecuador. (*Source: Financial times*, 10. 2. 04)



RESTAURANTS

Many of you have sent me information about fish restaurants, sadly too numerous to mention, but I can assure you that each and every one of them gets our pack; a 9 page document with covering letter. Some chefs and others in the trade contact us, mostly in a very positive way, and I am meeting with the Shellfish Association of Great Britain in November. They have invited us to put forward our points of view. Gordon Ramsay has closed his only restaurant in Scotland (nothing to do with us I'm afraid) but he wants to concentrate on his London outlets. It appears that his staff heard about the closure when they arrived for work. The restaurant is reported to be losing £200,000 a year. (*Source: Metro*, no date). And in the US, emails from dozens of concerned animal rights people to the Sushisamba Restaurants in New York have resulted in them no longer serving live lobster! This is quite a breakthrough as previously the live option seems to have been a big sales gimmick. (My thanks go to Angie and Francesca for bringing this horrible practice to my notice. Ed).

MISCELLANEOUS

The problem of Aberdeen's aggressive seagulls could be tackled by giving them contraceptives. (What a pity this doesn't seem to tackle human aggression! Ed.)

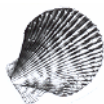
(Source: *P & J* 12. 11. 03)

+The BBC series *The Blue Planet*, the natural history programme about life under the sea, has spawned DVDs, CDs and even a £15-a-head Prom concert in Hyde Park.' Now the BBC has produced the *Blue Planet*, the movie, renamed *Deep Blue*. (Source: *Independent*, 10. 2. 03).

+A drunken thug who killed a swan with his bare hands in front of shocked Christmas shoppers was jailed for three months. Michael Barnett wrung the bird's neck, smashed it on to a concrete path and tossed it into the River Exe from Exeter quayside, a court was told. (Source: *Daily Mirror*, 12. 2. 04)

+And from the *New Scientist*, 14. 2. 04, 'I think they're going to be a little confused – the world as they knew it is going to be somewhat tilted.' Sharon Ehasz of Tempe, Arizona, on the successful operation to separate her two conjoined tortoises. (*Associated Press*, 9th Feb.)

+An excellent letter in the *Portsmouth News*, 28. 3. 04, decries the disgusting way that the competitors in 'I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here' treated the animals in the programme. The letter says 'Why do people have such a complete lack of respect for our fellow creatures, and show such a complete disregard for their feelings?' It goes on to say that we have no right to inflict such suffering on any living creature. When will we ever learn?



FISH AND MARINE MAMMALS

A new report and video 'Troubled Waters', has been released to mark the launch of a global campaign against whaling to highlight the true extent of the cruelty inherent in the

modern day killing of whales. In his foreword, Sir David Attenborough describes how the report contains "hard scientific evidence that there is no humane way to kill a whale at sea." During this year, Iceland, Norway and Japan will kill more than 1,400 whales by so-called scientific and commercial whaling. Although commercial whaling has been banned since 1986, over 20,000 great whales have been killed since the ban came into force. (*Newsflash from World Society for the Protection of Animals [WSPA]*, 10. 3. 04)

+the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) has been holding a 'swim with dolphins in Florida' competition. While this would seem an excellent way of meeting these beautiful creatures, some evidence has emerged that the dolphins are being stressed by the constant stream of humans in their midst. I don't know if the idea is good or bad. Anything to help humans show more respect for our fellow creatures, but, as ever, we seem to do everything to excess!

+In January Greenpeace set out to campaign against the wholesale slaughter of dolphins and porpoises. The animals are being killed in such numbers in the nets of fishing boats in the Western Approaches to the Channel that conservationists believe some species are in danger of being wiped out. The campaign is hoping to force European governments to take action to stop it. (Source: *The Independent*, 21. 1. 04)

+And harking back to the tourism industry, penguins, dolphins, dingoes – all face the same danger – tourism, according to a report by Charles Arthur in *The Independent*, 4. 3. 04. In Antarctica, more than a thousand crab eater seals have died mysteriously in Prince Gustav channel. The cause may be a human disease. Polar bears in Manitoba become more vigilant when tourists are near, and this could use up energy they may need later. Yellow-eyed penguin chicks are often under weight because their heart rate and metabolic rate rises when humans are close. Bottlenose dolphins in the Moray Firth spend more time surfacing together when boats are there. This could cut the time they have left to find food.

How sad that human enthusiasm leads to these problems.



+Fish farms and anglers face checks by inspectors from the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA) amid new scientific claims that fish can feel pain. Dr. Victoria Braithwaite, of Edinburgh University's school of biological sciences, studied the type of pain receptors in fish and concluded they were similar to those of mammals. The SSPCA is prepared to prosecute when appropriate.

+Fish use energy from mini-whirlpools to shoot themselves through turbulent water, experts have found. They slalom between swirling vortices, picking up a forward push from each other. The discovery could lead to improved designs for robotic underwater vehicles or better systems to help fish swim past dams, a team from Harvard University in Massachusetts told the journal *Science*. (No name or date.)

+Claudia Tarry of Animal Aid tells how she rescued a goldfish called Fat Bob, found that the creature was lonely and needed a friend and finally ended up with a further 16. Sadly Fat Bob died of cancer, but eventually Claudia set free all the remaining fish in a suitable pond.

+ 'At a recent Countryside Alliance angling conference, one key message emerged from the assembled angling representatives: cormorants are destroying our fisheries'. So wrote Charles Jardine, director, Countryside Alliance Campaign for Angling in a letter to the *Essex Chronicle*, 12. 2. 04. (Well, well, and yet angling is our most popular sport according to some! Ed.) Mr Jardine says he echoes Lord Mason's call for a realistic cormorant management programme before the situation becomes uncontrollable! (Yes, well. Any suitable management ideas ? Ed.)

+ The results of Michigan Lawsuit Abuse Watch's annual Wacky Warnings Label Contest are in. My pet one was on a fish hook – 'harmful if swallowed'. (*Source: Ind. On Sunday*, 18. 1. 04) And a rather strange

little item from *The Guardian*, 13. 1. 04, showing fishermen sheltering in transparent tents while fishing on the ice in Astana, capital of Kazakhstan. They look as though they are set in blocks of ice! Very eerie.

POEM

Unreachable

Who can see
 In the waves careering
 Stone cold or translucent
 In the lights or dark of the sea
 Oceans demanding
 Their own marked excess
 Leaving their hand in their
 Elegant tresses, wild they wing.

But we cannot wander
 In far-flung flying spray
 We may only tread in still hidden
 Mysteries in our squalor
 We know not the killing
 But we know well-a-day the death
 Reaches expire, all devastation
 In the unholy human pyre, fulfilling

The avarice and demand
 In the blood of the innocent in the
 Levelling marvellous beauties and knowledge
 Most rare, we cannot know the suffering
 In the sand, awaiting
 The inspiration of another hand.

John Amsden

