

THE SHELLFISH NETWORK
NEWSLETTER, Summer 2004



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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.



Well, here we are again, with abuse of animals still going strong, but so are you compassionate folk out there who are so supportive and without whose help little would be done to alleviate the suffering. Thanks to those who sent submissions to the Scottish Exec., as we did, and thanks to you all. Julie

LOBSTERS, CRABS AND CRAYFISH etc

A giant lobster thought to be more than 30 years old has been found standing guard over a barnacle-encrusted watch. The animal was seen by divers carrying out maintenance work at Blyth Harbour, off the Northumberland coast. The watch was still telling the time accurately! The lobster, who has now lost his treasure, has been taken to the Blue Reef aquarium in Tynemouth

where it (sic) is said to be settling in well. (Source: *BBC News UK edition, 17. 6. 04*) I have also been informed that the lobster is living in a large wave tank along with other marine creatures. The watch is displayed close to the lobster's new home, and if claimed many members of the public have volunteered to replace it for the lobster. (Thanks to Nikki for that info.)

.....
 Jonathan Lander, 42, has been unable to work since his boat was broken into at Chapman's Pool Dorset, on 13 June and all his lobsters freed, he told BBC News Online. It seems five generations of the Lander family have fished in the waters off the Purbeck coast, with his nephew becoming the latest.

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Every Autumn spiny lobsters march off the coast of Florida in groups of 100,000 or so. They migrate for about a month. To protect themselves they march in file lines of up to 60, each antennae touching the tail in front. (Source: *Ocean Explorer Discovery Kids. Sue Nicholson, Marshall Publishing, London*)

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In an article in the *Fairfield County Weekly, New Mass. Media Inc. 2002*, Philip Innes describes live lobster on the menu in a Bay Area sushi bar. He says that the sushi chef severed the lobster from the waist down with a single thwack of his cleaver. Innes and his friend thought it was dead. The chef draped the lobster's torso with a white napkin. To their dismay, the cloth napkin started to crawl around, threatening to tumble off the display case where it had been placed. They couldn't bear to lift the napkin and wet their eyes on 'half a lobster dragging itself around by its front claws.' He goes on to say that another 2,000 year old Japanese tradition is to pin down a fish, remove its flesh then replace it on the – still live- fish. Innes thinks that this is nothing to do with freshness, but seems to be to 'make a lingering spectacle of the animal's suffering. If a creature's demise were swift, as ... eating live creatures it might be less

problematic.’ (Well at least he shows some compassion. As far as I can see, eating any creatures is problematic, especially for the creatures! Ed.)

+ The Tasmanian Giant Freshwater Lobster is considered to be the largest freshwater invertebrate in the world. They are slow growing, slow to colonise and are very shy. Their diet is mainly decaying wood but leaves, fish, rotting flesh and detritus are also eaten. (From the *Home Page of Eco Tourism*.)

+ 4,000 lobsters were boiled alive in Lisbon to celebrate the EU championships. I have no more info. at present. Will let all who have e-mail know more later. Ed.

+ On June 7 the RSPCA signed a written agreement with the Secretary of state for DEFRA to allow them to perform the functions of an ‘approved prosecutor’ under the Protection of animals (amendment) Act 2000. (Thanks Linda)



A rather nice little article in the *Telegraph Weekend 1.5.04* discusses some of the foreshore fauna unearthed by Christopher Middleton on a course in Wales. Among the creatures discovered, such as the king ragworm, which has no reproductive organ, so just bursts at mating time, and the bloodworm, which has four sets of teeth which sprout from an extra telescopic length of sharp-toothed red proboscis, was a velvet swimming crab. This is ‘a pugnaciously pincer-breed that adopt a fighting, come-on-let’s-be-having-you stance the minute you lift up their stone. One of these crabs is so outraged by the intrusion that it launches an all-out attack on the spade, claws striking the metal with great, clanging blows.’ The article goes on to describe the incredible creatures that inhabit this area of the Pembrokeshire estuary. It also advertises the four-day residential course if any one is interested!

+ Unfortunately, also in the *Telegraph Magazine, 22. 5. 04*, there is an article on catching and cooking crayfish which are the

only crustacea to be found in British fresh waters. (In some areas it is illegal to catch them as they are being wiped out by the American Signal crayfish. Ed.)

+ You may remember a charming little article on that friend of all animals, Gordon Ramsay, in a previous newsletter. It was in the *Independent 11. 10. 03*. Here is an extra section I hadn’t seen before:

‘At times, Gordon Ramsay comes on like the Fat Boy in the Pickwick Papers whose refrain was, “I wants to make your flesh creep.” Sometimes it’s hilarious, sometimes less so – as when he tells you about how horrified his daughter Megan was to learn that he planned to take the sweet little frog she’d found in the garden, yank its legs off, deep-fry it and serve it with minted crystals. It must be a tough break, to be a family pet in the Ramsay household.’

If you wish to write a polite letter to him, suggesting that he re-think his attitude towards non-humans, his address is: 68 royal Hospital road, Chelsea, London SW3 4HP. Or you could talk to him on 020 7352 4441



ALL THE LITTLE ONES

+ According to an article in *The Telegraph, 29. 4. 04*, the Prince of Wales said that trawlermen should be barred from large areas of the sea to allow endangered fish stocks to recover. He told an audience in Plymouth that the idea of a large network of ‘no-take zones’ would not be popular but was long overdue. (I should think it would be very popular, but not with the humans! Ed)

+ There is now a permanent ban on the use of any bottom trawl or similar towed nets operating in contact with the bottom of the sea in areas connected off the North West coast of Scotland. *Source: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)*.

+ And it seems that ‘People have been murdered in 11 countries in conflict linked

to prawn farming’, says the celebrity chef Ken Hom. Mr Hom has recorded a video message for the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) which is campaigning against abuses associated with the prawn and shrimp industry. Prawn fisheries are responsible for one third of the world’s discarded catch, the EJF says, despite producing only 2 per cent of global seafood supplies. ‘150,000 marine turtles are killed by prawn trawlers every year’ Mr Hom says. ‘Two years of research have shown the prawn industry has been associated with land seizure and displacement of tens of thousands of people; pollution of agricultural land and water ; violence and intimidation; corruption and...a host of other abuses’, says Mike Shanahan of EJF. However, some retailers and importers in the UK have shown genuine willingness to address negative impacts of prawn production. *Source: The Times, 19. 12. 03*

+ Bathers have been warned to be on the lookout for ‘kick-boxing’ shrimps after a pair of this rare species was discovered off the Dorset coast. These animals, called mantis shrimps, are usually found in tropical waters and are reputed to be able to deliver punches with the force of a small calibre bullet. Two of the three-inch long creatures have been found in trawler nets in Weymouth Bay. Sheila Patek, a biologist from the University of California said, ‘...It has the swiftest and perhaps the most brutal attack of any predator.’ *Source: Daily Telegraph, 17. 4. 04*

+ It appears that last summer’s heatwave produced an exceptional crop of oysters in the winter. ‘We are exceptionally lucky,’ Goulven Brest, president of the French Shell fish Federation, said. He added that the heatwave may have killed 13,000 people [in France] and plunged the Government into turmoil but it was a boon for gourmets. (Highly compassionate individual! Ed) *Source: The Times, 19. 12. 03*

+ And, according to an article in *The Telegraph Weekend, 22. 5. 04*, Shaun Hill, of the Merchant House in Ludlow said, ‘Hand-dived scallops are still alive shortly before they arrive here. The dredged ones are dead fish which come up with bucket-loads of seabed, and they tend to stink. As soon as a dredged scallop hits the pan, the water oozes out and it looks as though someone has played football with it.’ It seems that Spring has brought clearer waters to the west coast of Scotland and the south coast of England, allowing divers to collect one of our most prized and luxurious foods (sic) – hand-dived scallops. Shaun Hill has nothing but admiration for the divers who risk their lives to bring the very best to our tables. (Funny, no-one risks their lives to bring the very best to my table, but then I obviously belong to the veggie weirdos! Ed.)



+The discovery of a sea horse in the Thames estuary is a sign of the increasing cleanliness of the river, say the experts. The short-snouted sea horse, four inches long, was found in water off Leigh-on-Sea in Essex. They have not been seen in the Thames since 1976. *Source: Independent, 15. 6. 04*

ENVIRONMENT

According to an article in *The Independent, 5. 6. 04*, cold-water coral is being put at risk by deep-sea fishing. Until recently it was thought that the cold-water corals, which live in almost complete darkness at depths of up to 10,000 feet, were largely confined to northern waters off Canada, Scandinavia and the British Isles. But a study by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has found that they can thrive in warmer seas off the coasts of more than 40 countries from Spain to Surinam. A diverse range of sea creatures depends on coldwater corals to survive, and the destruction of these deep reefs by bottom-dredging trawlers (them again! Ed) is a serious issue. In this study, Professor Andre Friewald of the University

of Erlangen-Nuremberg in Germany says, 'We are finding not only new species of corals...in new locations but associated organisms such as snails and clams that were believed ...to have become extinct two million years ago.' The World Conservation Union said that the development of new fishing technologies for deep-sea fishing was the single greatest threat to deep-sea environments such as the cold-water coral reefs.

+ And scientists have discovered the UK's first known coral reef less than eight miles off the coast of Britain, a find that could help to unlock the secrets of marine life over the past 10,000 years. It has been found off the south-east of Barra in the Western Isles. Preliminary examination of the coral, which has legal protection, has already recorded more than 120 different species living on the reef and the scientists think they could find thousands more. *Source: Independent, 4. 6. 04*



+Plastic debris litters many beaches. Microscopic plastic fragments are ingested by worms, barnacles and other bottom-dwelling life, according to researchers. Larger plastic items are hazardous to sea life but it is unclear whether these tiny fragments pose an ecological risk. The latest evidence comes from a study conducted around the British Isles showing accumulations of microscopic fibres and bits of synthetic polymers in beach and seabed sediments.. although the sampling took place mainly around Britain, the global spread of plastic flotsam and jetsam probably means that other areas are likely to see build-ups too, said the leading author of the article, Dr. Richard C. Thompson, a marine ecologist at the University of Plymouth. *Source: The New York Times – articles for the Daily Telegraph. 20. 5. 04*

+Hurricanes sweeping across the North Atlantic ocean have triggered a spectacular 'bloom' of marine plants, satellite pictures have shown. The burst of phytoplankton is caused when the hurricanes stir up deeper

layers of the ocean, bringing nutrients to the surface where the microscopic plants live. After the storms have passed, the phytoplankton colonies grow and multiply for up to three weeks as minerals and other nutrients – particularly iron- become more plentiful. Phytoplankton are important because they can soak up huge amounts of carbon dioxide from the air immediately over the sea surface. They then deposit this carbon deep within the ocean, where it can stay for thousands of years. Some scientists have suggested that artificially fertilising the oceans with iron filings may trigger more phytoplankton to bloom and so help to offset the carbon dioxide pollution released as a result of human activities. (There must be an easier way! Ed.) *Source: The Independent, 28. 6. 04*

+And finally – from *the Health Telegraph, 21. 4. 04*, the seas are now being trawled for a 'new treasure' – medical treatments. Dr Phil Williamson, science co-ordinator for the Natural Environment Research Council, says: We are only just skimming the surface. Every schoolchild knows that the sea covers seven tenths of the earth's surface, but it also provides 95% of the inhabited volume of the planet and most is unexplored. Many of its vast number and variety of microscopic organisms are potentially valuable to us.' However, 'Increasingly it appears that bioactive substances are produced by tiny microbes that live inside the bodies of larger organisms such as sponges and corals and these are almost impossible to cultivate in the laboratory,' says Meredith Lloyd-Evans, whose company, BioBridge, has been commissioned by the Government to look at the potential for exploiting marine biotechnology. Compounds from the sea include agents said to help in the cure of cancer, arthritis etc (but since scientists are also thinking of emptying loads of iron filings into the sea, and plastic is finding its way into everything, I think I'll stick to natural land plants thanks! Ed)



'PETS' etc.

Many of you have written to Woolworths and Ottakar's regarding Sea Monkeys. You will be delighted to know that Ottakar's have now withdrawn them from their approved lists of products and will not re-order. All remaining ones will be sold as the UK supplier will not accept returns.

Woolworths, however, say that, 'in light of the concerns you have raised, we will consider increasing the communication to our customers as to the nature and care instructions of the sea monkeys.' Well, this is simply not good enough. Please continue writing to Woolworths plc, Royle Barn Road, Castleton, Rochdale Lancs OL11 3DU, and explain politely that so called care instructions will not encourage children to continue looking after these animals, when we know that they soon get bored with that kind of responsibility. You might like to thank Ottakar's for their decision: Brewery House, 36, Milford street, Salisbury, Wilts SP1 2AP.

+Now another charming 'toy' is on the market – the Minnokube. These are mini-aquariums containing diminutive minnow fish that apparently 'combine modern design with the proven therapeutic and psychological benefits of keeping fish in a working or domestic environment.' It seems that academic studies have, in recent years, revealed the extent to which proximity to an aquarium is conducive to health and well-being!! The article in *News (not sure which paper)* 4. 4. 04, goes on to say that, *with proper care and attention* (my italics) they can live for up to two years. (Personally I think that anyone who turns to this needs proper care and attention! Ed) I have no info. where the manufacturers can be found, but keep your eyes open and if you see any minnokubes, please find out who to contact, and also let me know. Thanks.

+A fluorescent zebra fish, known by its trademark of GloFish, has been on sale in the US since the beginning of the year. According to the company creating and marketing them, a Texas biotech firm called

Yorktown Technologies, GloFish, the world's first genetically engineered species to be made commercially available, are safe and the US Food and Drug Administration agrees. But campaigners concerned about the unknown effects of GM animals say this is a test case and if it is not subject to regulation it could open the floodgates to all manner of genetic horrors in the future. Glofish were originally developed at the National University in Singapore to detect water pollution. The idea was the fish would glow in the presence of toxins such as heavy metals. It was Yorktown Technologies that spotted their potential as pets (sic). The Centre for Food Safety and others argue that there is no way of knowing what might happen to the fish once they are sold. *Source: Independent, 4. 5. 04*

+Sadly, Makro are starting to sell live lobsters again. Please write to Makro, Wellington Circle, Altens, Aberdeen AB12 3QW explaining politely that the sales of live lobsters to the public will put the creatures through untold stress, and that most people have no idea how to kill the creatures 'humanely'. (There is, of course, no truly humane method of killing). Only experienced experts should undertake to do this, using the least traumatic methods. Animal Aid is working with us on this.

+One of our members has seen what appear to be real starfish in the Accessorize shops in their 'make your own greetings cards' packs. I have not seen them, but please keep a lookout. If you do see any, please contact Monsoon Building, 179, Harrow road, London, W2 6NB 020 7313 3000 or let me know. There is also a website that sells starfish

www.yourweddingcompany.com/index.php/action/ourchase/productId/338/categoryId/6

2 Polite letters explaining that these are living creatures, not merely decorations!

Some useful addresses:

Animal Aid: The Old chapel, Bradford Street, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 1AW 01732 364 546

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) websites:

www.fishinghurts.com,
www.lobsterlib.com,
www.prowildlife.net (Canada)

GENERAL

International 'Whalewatch' led by World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) is the new campaign initiative of over 140 non-governmental organisations representing more than 55 countries worldwide which focuses on the inherent cruelty associated with killing whales.

+ A new WSPA report highlighting the serious welfare concerns surrounding the trade in marine turtles is now available on line: 'Shell Shocked – welfare implications of the trade in marine turtles'.

+The council of Ministers, EU, has recently approved new legislation that will soon take effect for an increased protection of cetaceans (dolphins etc.) in Community waters in the future.

+dolphins shed a continuous stream of 'dandruff' to help them glide smoothly and quickly through the oceans. The skin-shedding technique reduces friction around their bodies and lets them reach speed that would otherwise be impossible. *Source: D. Telegraph, 15. 5. 04*

+conservationists fear the grey seals are at risk of being shot by inshore netmen protecting their livelihood and property. One Torbay fisherman said 'We don't want to kill the seals but we do like to be able to make a living.' (How about becoming an inshore market gardener? Plenty of room for those I should have thought, and no seals to speak of! Ed) *Source WMN. Thanks Debbie.*

+ The French animal protection organization One Voice was informed about a cow who escaped. She became known as Liberté and in a flash-action lots of mail went out pleading for her life, when she was finally caught. The collective effort had immediate success and she is now spending the rest of her life in a shelter-home. *Source:*

Vegetarismus, 8. 6. 04

+ A charming story in the *Veterinary Invertebrate Society News* tells how the Vet

Craig Connolly mended the shell of a Giant African Landsnail, which was 5 months old and belonged to a local primary. He used Nexabond to stick the broken bits together, and the snail is now doing well!



+Killer whales are struggling to make themselves heard over the noise of tourist traffic, scientists have discovered. These whales live in pods and communicate with each other over distances of several miles. *Source: Daily Telegraph 29. 4. 04*

FISH

+ The indiscriminate slaughter of species that goes on at sea would never be tolerated on land, says Charles Clover, *Daily Telegraph, 1. 7. 04*

+ Ethically caught fish is available but it is invisible to the consumer. So says an article in *The Big Issue*, under the heading 'Six fish to eat with a clear conscience'. !

+ And brown trout in a royal Scottish loch made famous in a book by Prince Charles contain high levels of chemicals, it was reported in the *Mirror, 6. 4. 04*

+More on fish in my next! Ed.

POEM

Time ago
 The sea bed lived
 A myriad colours
 In the deep floes, slow
 The tides and rhythms we know
 From the darkest deep
 To the shimmering dance
 In sun slant or moonlight glow
 In the strange forms past
 Their giant or tiny forebears
 Last some still hidden
 Where we passed
 And history secret yet fast
 In the rock or coral wave
 In shell or mount caste
 Time ago.

John Amsden

