

THE SHELLFISH NETWORK
NEWSLETTER, Autumn 2004



NO 33

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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, this has been quite a couple of months. First, my usual grateful thanks to all you out there, sending in articles and cheques and all your good wishes.

You will probably know that a new Animal Welfare Bill is being discussed at the moment. It virtually replaces the 1911 Animal Protection Act amongst others and has some good points, although it plans to license pet markets again, which had been banned in the 1983 Regulations, although it would make the giving of goldfish as prizes at fairs illegal.

We put together a submission, which we duly sent to the Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) hoping that shellfish would be recognised as 'animals', as they are in the new Scottish Bill. Our main points were that they are capable of feeling stress, fear and pain and we presented scientific evidence to that effect. We were then invited to give oral evidence to a

committee. Since we were on the same bench as the Angling group, who were very negative and wanted fish removed from the Bill, we were able to be extremely positive and request that shellfish and all invertebrates should most certainly be included! I was greatly helped in my presentation by our supportive barrister, Simon Buckhaven. We argued the plight of the shellfish from trapping through transport, storage to killing. We were listened to very politely and the questions asked were intelligent. The day went well, but we won't know the results until the Bill finally becomes an Act. We also pushed for the removal of all sales of live animals at markets etc. from the Bill. This therefore not only included the exotic pet trade, but also live shellfish. Fingers crossed for this – a small step for 'man', but a mighty leap for our beautiful invertebrate friends.



PRAWNS, MUSSELS AND THE TRADE

+ Scientists are backing fishermen in calls for an increase in the west of Scotland prawn quota. It seems that nephrop (molluscs) numbers are up by 30%. *Source: Aberdeen Press & Journal 5. 5. 04* (If left alone they might get back to their original, natural numbers! Ed.)

+ But according to *the P & J on 9th September*, the fishermen are still waiting to know if they can increase their quota. The outcome of further advice from scientists at the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea is not expected now until October!
 +Prawn farmers are using a most cruel method of breeding to make money. As the female prawn does not normally lay eggs during the day, one of her eyes is plucked out. When she stops laying, the other eye is then plucked out. Prawn farms destroy mangroves and fish and the birds in the lagoons. (Thanks to Linda for this, 23. 8. 04)

+The WWF and Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) are calling for new laws to protect Scotland's shellfish farming industry. Rebecca Boyd, project officer for the programme said: 'Management of our seas has become a free-for-all, failing not only our

wildlife but also the industries that depend on the resources the seas provide...shellfish growers...are among the many marine users who could gain from improved marine management that maintains healthy seas for all.' Pacific oysters, native oysters, scallops, queens and mussels are all farmed in Scotland. *Source: P & J 20. 5. 04*

(I never understand why humans have to *manage* the environment in order for it to do what it would do naturally without them! Ed.)

+Scottish shellfish farmers have welcomed a change of heart from Europe on new hygiene regulations. Doug McLeod, chairman of the Association of Scottish Shellfish Growers said that the new rules would have destroyed what is a thriving industry in Scotland.

Source: P & J 22. 6. 04 (Let's hope no health is destroyed by throwing out these regulations. Ed.)



OYSTERS, COCKLES, SHRIMP ETC

+A top oyster restaurant, the Whitstable Oyster Fishery Company, claims that it owns half of Derrick Bensted's cottage and is trying to evict him. The development manager at the restaurant says that under an unusual Victorian lease, half the former pub, Stag Cottage, was built on land rented from the firm at around 1860. *Source: Sunday Express 8. 8. 04*

+In an article in *OFM* (no date) it seems that 'cockles have an image problem, a new name might help'. (I wonder what they call themselves, and do they all have an image problem, or only the plain ones? Ed)

+But six months after the Morecambe Bay disaster, migrant workers are again risking their lives. These people point out that they will be on the streets if they don't do the cockle picking for the gang masters. They only get the smallest 'leftovers' and there is terrible violence between the gangs. *Source: Independent, 10. 7. 04.* (A sadness for all concerned, both people and animals. Ed.)

+And a letter from a *Mail on Sunday* reader 25. 7. 04 explains that the constant plunder of

Morecambe Bay will soon drive the species to extinction.

+Periwinkles have brood pouches like a pregnancy, and you can see the developing embryos. Scientists at Leeds University believe that they may be watching evolution in the making. While scanning the shoreline at Robin Hood's Bay in North Yorkshire, a student noticed that two distinct sets of periwinkles, one at the high-tide mark and one nearer the sea, did not seem keen on breeding with each other. John Graeme the Leed's biologist on this programme believes that the divergence is being driven by the need to escape crabs. One community has evolved the means to move further from the sea, the other has stayed put and developed bigger shells. He says: 'these are the processes that underlie biodiversity. It's amazing, yet we take it completely for granted. It's wonderful stuff.' *Source: The Times 22. 7. 04*



+ One female model at the Chelsea Flower show, in the Australian garden, was dressed entirely in shrimps. It was hideous! *Source: pictures from Daily Mail, 25. 5. 04*

LOBSTERS & CRAYFISH

+ You may remember that the Lobster Liberation Front released many lobsters a few weeks ago. Police are still investigating the incident. The LLF says: 'No animal should be sacrificed for human greed, let alone be boiled alive.' *Source: Daily telegraph, 30. 7. 04.*

+Novelist David Foster Wallace was asked to write about the Maine Lobster Festival by the editor of *Gourmet* magazine. But hilariously he wrote that the festival was 'cheesy', 'boring' and 'full of irksome little downers'. He also devoted two-thirds of the article to a physiological and philosophical meditation on the bioethics of lobster boiling. 'I wasn't quite prepared for this,' admitted editor Ruth Reichl. 'I was blown away. I never in a million years thought this particular issue' – lobster-cide – 'would come up'. *Source*

Globe Columnist Alex Beam. 5. 8. 04.
 (Thanks to Monica for that little gem! Ed.)
 + Seven-stone speed-eater (sic) Sonya Thomas from Virginia ate 38 lobsters in 12 minutes to win the World Lobster Eating Contest in Maine USA. *Source: The Mail on Sunday, 29. 8. 04* and according to Sara Leitch, *Associated Press* writer each contestant had a partner cracking the shells and pulling out the meat. Eleven competitors ate as many lobsters as they could in a 12-minute period, devouring a total of 300 pounds. The competition sought to elevate Maine into the big leagues of competitive eating, alongside New York's Coney Island with its Nathan's Famous hot dogs and New Orleans with its oysters. (I do hope they don't all get sick. What a shame it would be for such charming people. Ed.)



+ John Andrews denies releasing numerous signal crayfish into stocked fish ponds at Drumtochty Estate last year. It is believed to be the first time in Britain that anyone has been charged with the offence 'a breach of the Wildlife and Countryside Act'. *Source: P & J 10. 7. 04* (Signal crayfish come from the US and tend to kill off our own, native smaller ones. It is an offence to catch these. Ed.)
 + Carolyn Hart, in the *Telegraph Magazine*, 22. 5. 04, says that you can catch crayfish using a chunk of bacon tied to a long piece of string. They can also be bought from Harrods. (Is there no end to the imagination of these poor, starving folk? Ed.)

CONSERVATION

Corals, molluscs and other organisms could soon struggle to make their protective calcium carbonate shells because of changes in seawater chemistry caused by burning fossil fuels. Almost half of the carbon emitted by human activities over the past two centuries has ended up acidifying the oceans. *Source: D. Tel. 4. 8. 04*

+ Britain is to support restriction on international trade in the humphead wrasse, a huge coral reef fish that is highly prized in restaurants in the Far East. The fish are

stunned with cyanide, which causes great damage to coral reefs. They are then shipped out in containers to be kept alive in huge restaurant tanks for diners to make their choice. *Source: D. Tel. 25. 9. 04* (I should think the cyanide causes great damage to the fish! And would you eat something covered in cyanide? I wonder if the diners know? Ed.)
 + And it seems that levels of the neurotoxin mercury in the larger predator fish, including tuna, shark, swordfish, king mackerel or tilefish, are more dangerously high than the Food and Drug Agency (FDA) is letting on. These fish carry concentration of methyl mercury, a by-product of smokestack emissions in their flesh. This can accumulate in the tissues of both fish and humans. *Source: Michael Bender, exec. Director of Mercury Policy Project.*

+ Research scientists from Oban have reached the halfway stage in a £1mill. experiment to construct the largest artificial reef in Europe. An aim of the project to try to boost the country's dwindling fish stocks by creating commercially-viable man-made habitats to encourage marine life to grow in new areas. *Source: P & J 23. 6. 04* (Don't humans make life complicated? Instead of spending all that money on artificial reefs, why not stop fishing and spend the cash on growing ethical food. It really is simple! Ed.)



+ A third of the male fish in British rivers are turning into females because of 'gender-bending' pollutants being discharged from sewage outflows. Researchers said there was unequivocal evidence that human female sex hormones released into rivers from sewage farms are responsible. *Source: Ind. 10. 7. 04*
 Snails and clams thought to be extinct 2m years ago have been discovered living on cold water coral reefs which are being destroyed by fishermen using heavy trawl gear to drag the ocean bed. The existence of creatures such as giant squid and sea spiders thought to have disappeared millions of years ago has only become possible because of new technology used to explore the deep ocean. The coral reefs, themselves a new discovery,

have been carbon-dated as 8,000 years old.

Source: Guardian, 5. 6. 04

+ In the mid-1960s Britain appeared to deliver the unique ecosystem of Aldabra, an atoll in the Indian Ocean, a death sentence by deciding to site a military base there. The atoll is home to giant tortoises and huge crabs powerful enough to rip open coconuts.

However, campaigners rolled back that decision in what was feted as a landmark victory for the modern environmental movement. Now a luxury hotel is being planned for the atoll. If this goes ahead it will cause untold damage to this little island.

Source: Guardian, 12. 4. 04

+Global warming is causing a disaster at sea. In the North Sea in particular, where the water temperature has risen by 2C in the past 20 years, the whole ecosystem is thought to be undergoing a 'regime shift', or a fundamental alteration in the interaction of its component species. 'Think of the North Sea as an engine, and plankton as the fuel driving it,' said Euan Dunn of the RSPB. 'The fuel mix has changed so radically in the past 20 years, as a result of climate change, that the whole engine is now spluttering and starting to malfunction...'
Source: Ind. 30. 7. 04



+And the law is failing to protect wildlife in the sea, whether dolphins, fish or shellfish, according to the most extensive review of the marine environment carried out for the Government for 25 years. The examination of the current system of marine conservation, presented to ministers, concluded that 'it is not fit for the purpose'. The review calls for the Government to set up a framework of nature conservation areas at sea, similar to those on land. *Source: D. Tel. 26. 7. 04*

+ Because of global warming, more exotic visitors are arriving at our shores. In June 2002 a group of bright purple jellyfish were found washed up at Kimmeridge Bay. Earlier this year holiday-makers were warned of the dangers of the 'kick-boxing' mantis shrimps found in Weymouth Bay. And in early August divers photographed a pregnant short

snouted seahorse searching for a place to give birth off Purbeck. There have been many other discoveries. *Source: D. Tel. 12. 8. 04.*



CULINARY

Well, I have so much on the disgusting, greedy and thoughtless discussion on the types of animals people eat, that there is not enough room to enter it all. Suffice it to say that most of it is nothing to do with need, but lots to do with greed! For instance, in the *Guardian*, 26. 6. 04, Jonathan Watts in Beijing describes his friend eating fried silkworm grubs, sliding one 'between his teeth with an audible crunch...his face quickly contorted into a this-shouldn't-be-inflicted-on-anyone grimace...when his tongue and taste buds confronted the gooey bug entrails inside.'

+ or 'The human plates lie face up on the table wearing nothing but a thong and a random scattering of delicacies to preserve their modesty. Gary decorates their bare flesh with sushi (raw fish), which he places on giant tea-leaves adorned with multicoloured orchids. 'Gary' is the Hollywood celebrity (sic) chef Gary Arabis. *Source: Guardian, 7. 4. 04*



And Nigel Slater explains why he is stuck on octopus. 'The tentacles are really rather beautiful and ancient-looking, like something you'd see on a fresco at the V&A. I salt my fingers and tug at the pink skin...I had been warned octopus can be tough, but this one is a pussycat. The slitheriness has turned to a delicious gelatinous texture – sweet and meaty'. *Source: OM 14. 3. 04* (Sorry but I am beginning to feel queasy. Who are these people? Ed.)

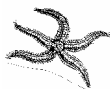
+ Carolyn Hart says that lobsters and crabs are easy to store. If they are moving they are alive and the rule is to cook them as soon as you can. She goes on to say that with smaller shellfish, they should be put into three

tablespoons of olive oil heated in a large pan. *Source: Tel. mag. 7. 8. 04* (In other words, fry (called 'steaming' in this case) the poor creatures alive in hot fat.

+ Dea Birkett, in *US 24. 7. 04*, says in Chesapeake Bay they serve meals where you're actually supposed to get messy. 'On a wooden deck built on stilts over the sea, a paper cloth is thrown over the table and every diner is handed a wooden mallet and a plastic apron. Blue crabs are served by the dozen in plastic buckets, and getting shards of shell all over you as you smash them is part of the process. For the three-year-old twins, being given a wooden hammer as an eating implement was about as fun as a meal could get. I don't think I saw a knife and fork for over a week.' (I don't think any more need to be said. What kind of compassionate adults are those children going to make? Ed)



+ Also, in *OFM, August 04*, is another offering of as many living creatures as possible being boiled and slaughtered, this time on the beach, encouraging 4 year-olds to eat anything that moves. The pictures in this article, of beautiful lobsters, crabs, winkles and others make you weep. And then, of course, there is Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall. He is in the Seychelles.



+ Finally, a little offering from Mark Hix, who discovers that heaven has claws. He says that fried soft-shell crab with carrot and coriander salad and the American blue swimmer crab knocked him sideways. *Source: Ind. Mag. No date.* (Perhaps he should have a go at the huge crabs on Aldabra? Talking about knocking sideways! Ed.)



FISH AND OTHER MARINE CREATURES

Norwegian fishermen catch wild cod alive and keep the fish in floating cages for several

weeks. On inspection of these floating cages the Norwegian Food Safety Authority discovered that fish were pumped through undersized pipes, so that they got injured and still stored alive. The floating cages were full of dead and dying fish. The fish got little or no food and there was too little space and too little oxygen in the cages. On inspection one inspector reports 40% of fish found dead. *Source: Norwegian animal welfare Alliance.* (Thanks to EssexAnimal Freedom for this. Ed.)

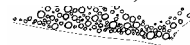
+Greenpeace New Zealand say that every year, deep-sea trawler nets devastate an area of the global seabed twice the size of the United States, scraping up everything from coral to sharks. The environment group has renewed its call for an immediate moratorium on the use of the nets. *Source: Ind. 19. 6. 04*

+The Food Standards Agency's warning that some types of fish present a danger to pregnant women and children has been widely ignored by the food industry, according to research carried out by the Vegetarian and Vegan Foundation. *Source: Veggiehealth. No date.*

+ A 4ft catfish swallowed a watch and two mobiles dropped in its tank at Marwell Zoo. *Source: Mirror 6. 3. 04*

+ In 2003 a herpes virus, commonly referred to as KHV, a disease harmless to all other animals, caused huge fatalities to the Japanese koi carp. The epidemic forced koi fanciers to cancel their prize shows and farmers of edible carp to destroy their entire stock. *Source: The Times.*

+ 'The US bans illegal trade in beluga caviar as fish nears extinction.' Beluga caviar, at £80 an ounce (28g) is probably the world's most expensive food. The ban offers the first real hope that the beluga sturgeon species, estimated to date back 250m years, can be saved. *Source: Guardian, 21. 4. 04*



+ Prince Charles indulged in one of his favourite pastimes, fly fishing, during an extended break at his Scottish hideaway, with his partner Camilla Parker Bowles. The river bank, the River Dee near Birkhall, where his

grandmother used to fish with passion, has been the scene of many of his happiest times since he was a young man. *Source: Daily Express, 14. 4. 04.*

+Chef Rick Stein's brother, John, is professor of neurophysiology at Oxford University and has spent years studying the basis of dyslexia in the brain. Now they are to praise and promote the health effects of fish at a forthcoming event for the public. They reckon that fish is good for the brain. Apparently we turn our backs on a fishy diet with disastrous results. 'Fish is the only treatment of serious offenders shown to work' says Bernard Gesch, Prof. Stein's colleague. *Source: D. Tel. 21. 7. 04* (We can get all essential foods from nuts and other foods with no need to kill anything. Or am I kidding myself and after over 20 years as a vegan I am now brain dead? Don't you dare say a word! Ed)



+The endangered loggerhead turtle has lost its most important sanctuary in the Mediterranean after the Greek government forced the closure of a marine park by diverting funds to the Olympic Games. The beaches of Zakynthos Marine National Park were previously under 24-hour guard during the nesting season. But the eight staff and 36 wardens have not been paid for almost a year after the Greek ministry of environment and public works cut all its funds. Last year more than 1,200 loggerhead nests were recorded in the park. So far this year, about 450 have been noted, with some sites formerly popular with the turtles now barren. *Source: D. Tel. 8. 7. 04*

+ The Sea Turtle Protection society is always in need of volunteers, so if any one is able to give up some time and go over to help out, please contact: Archelon, Sea Turtle

Protection society. PO BOX 30, 741 00 Rethymno, Greece. Crete@archelon.gr
+The proposed Silvertown new aquarium. – the view of DEFRA is that 'well managed zoos have a valuable role to play, not only in the education of the public about wildlife and conservation issues, but also in the conservation of endangered species.'
Please contact Paul Nicol, Policy advisor, Regional & Local Branch, Tourism Division, Dept. for Culture, Media and Sport, 2-4 Cockspur St, LONDON SW1Y 5DH and explain politely why you do not agree that wild animals kept in cages or tanks have a valuable role to play. They should be left to lead their lives in their natural environment.
+Some much needed good news – Makro have stopped selling live lobster. I have received written assurance. Thanks to all who wrote etc.
+And our own Pippa, who is the Australian arm of the Network, liberated 10 beautiful little mitten crabs on her journey to the UK recently. They were very well cared for on the plane and at the airport, and the Animal Welfare Officer has now ensured that the Shanghai Ten live out the rest of their lives in a 'safe house'! Brilliant.

Sea Ride

Slow they ride the oceans wide
In high waters or the calming deeps
From east to west the waves bestride

The many netted cast aside
In cruelty capture of suffering linger
Allied where they could no longer
bide

Of late one small voyager
In the Thames River espied, a murky
history lent
Harboured their brief lives

But far-flung the flying shoals
Gracing the waters of another day
In reflective quiet or giant rolls soar
yet in terror death toll.

John Amsden