

THE SHELLFISH NETWORK
NEWSLETTER, Spring 2005



NO 35

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.



Articles, stamps, cash and cheques, all from you good people. Thanks and thanks again. There is much to discuss and not enough room for it all, but I'll try to get it all in!
Julie

EVENTS

There will be an Animal Blessing Service on 12 June 2005, 3pm at Craigiebuckler Church, Springfield Road, Aberdeen All animals with their human companions welcome. For further info. contact Myrna Forrester on 01224 313 367 or email myrna@doull86.freeseve.org.uk

+Wild Shows & Feasts is an organisation dedicated to generating interest in the vegan way of life through vegan banquets and theatre shows. If you are interested contact Tamasin, at Wild Shows & Feasts, Bridge-5 Mills, 22a, Beswick St., Ancoats, Manchester M4 7HR



SHELLFISH INDUSTRY

+ Commercial harvesting of shellfish in the River Swale has been stopped after toxins were found. This affected mussels, cockles and oysters. The prohibition lasted for 28 days. *Source: BBC News UK edition 22. 2. 05*

+Scottish shellfish farmers have complained to the Scottish Executive that government efforts to clean up sewage discharges in coastal waters are totally inadequate. Now they are angry about new Food Standards Authority (FSA) proposals for classifying the cleanliness of shellfish production and harvesting sites. Doug McLeod, chairman of the Scottish Shellfish Growers Association said that the FSA has not changed its assessment procedure so the water quality must be declining. He added 'That must mean that the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) is not doing its job of protecting coastal waters and that Scottish Water is not doing its job in treating sewage and water run-off to prevent the decline in water quality..'

Source: Aberdeen Press & Journal, 1. 3. 05

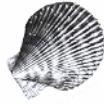
+But shellfish growers are seeking clarification from the FSA after it emerged that many harvesting areas are in danger of being downgraded. *Source: P & J 5. 3. 05*
+Malcolm Dickson, a leading aquaculture expert, has claimed that farmed seafood can be the salvation for Scotland's beleaguered fisheries sector. He also claimed that the fish-farming industry in the Highlands and Islands was about to boom. *Source: P & J, 29. 1. 05*

+New rules to clamp down on illegal fish landings could have a 'devastating' effect on the west-coast prawn sector, it has been claimed. The Government is looking to introduce measures that will lead to suppliers who buy fish directly from boats being penalised for accepting produce in excess of the quota limits. *Source: P & J 19. 2. 05*

+ David Skea, 18 a diver, is an agent for some of the professional divers who dive for shellfish throughout the Highlands and Islands. The shellfish, mostly scallops, are much sought after by chefs and other

speciality outlets throughout Europe.

Source: *P & J* 20. 1. 05



LOBSTERS

A particularly nasty little item in the *Telegraph Weekend* 8. 1. 05 by Belinda Richardson describes a meal at a Chinese restaurant. ‘...First to arrive are two live lobsters, which are pretty lively fellows considering they have only recently flown in from Canada. The plan is to chop them live into seven clean sections and braise them in a wok for a couple of minutes.’ ‘We don’t like to boil them because it takes away the flavour,’ says Jo. ‘So, chop, chop. Is that OK?’ Absolutely, we all agree, although the children look worried...’ (What is it with these people who think only of their stomachs? When did their humanity ebb away? Let’s hope the children kept their worries and grow up to be a little more decent! Ed).

+ The many articles in the papers on the Norwegian research into pain in lobsters were simply media hype. I have read that paper and many others on pain in invertebrates and they all come up with the fact that we cannot prove that they do or they don’t feel pain! Most of the creatures do have a form of analgesic in their make up, and they all respond to ‘averse stimuli’. I don’t know about you, but I side with the animals. Let’s leave them alone and stop making lame excuses for the appalling way we treat them in general! Ed.

+ When the Prince of Wales was in Australia recently he visited the Lobster Australia factory (sic) which has developed ways of hibernating lobsters before they are exported overseas to make sure they travel in comfort. (Ahh, how sweet! Ed) Source: *D. Telegraph*, 1. 3. 05

+ A strange article in *The New York Times supplement to the D Tel*, 24. 3. 05 states that one lobster in a million is blue. Well, all the live lobsters that I have seen are blue. The article ends by saying ‘Heat breaks down the astaxanthin wrapping protein, destroying the blue pigment. In

other words, on a dinner plate, a blue lobster would probably be just like any other lobster: red.’ Well, well! Ed. +Those of you who are on email will have been inundated already with messages from me. But you may have read in the papers about the pub The Halfway House at Bastonford which had a month-long lobster festival. One of our supporters, Pauline, sent this report:

‘A photo spotted in a local paper, the Malvern Gazette, of chefs holding lobsters, alerted a SN supporter that the local pub was holding a six week long lobster festival. The poor creatures were being flown in from Canada. When asked on the phone how the lobsters were being killed we were told “By the guidelines”. But it seems he was using old guidelines and not the latest, supported by Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) and New South Wales. Not ideal, but slightly less horrific! He has had these from us. (Our own Dept. of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs does not seem to have issued guidelines on the cooking of shellfish as far as I understand it, Ed.) Some protests have been held at the pub; two supporters sitting in the pub until police were called to eject them. There followed protests on the pavement outside with banners and leaflets. Supporters had to endure a drinker coming out of the pub and calling them unprintable names and the young chefs hurling eggs at them. On the plus side the pub is on a busy main road and there were lots of hoots from motorists. One supporter then gave a phoned interview for the Hereford and Worcester radio.’ Sadly, the landlord seems intent on continuing with these festivals. Unknown to the protesters, the pub was later daubed with the words ‘Free the Lobsters’ and ‘Lobster Liberation.’ Although the Shellfish Network doesn’t take part in such direct action, we can understand the frustration. The graffiti can be cleaned up – the lobsters will be a long time dead. Pauline will keep us posted on any further festivals. Perhaps a veggiefest would be a good idea!

+ A disease that rots lobsters' shells and can kill them is now affecting 30% of lobsters along America's New England coast. The cause of the disease and how it spreads remain a mystery. *Source: P & J 18. 2. 05*

+ Bubba, the lobster, died after he was moved into quarantine. He weighed 22lbs and may have survived two world wars. The Pittsburgh Zoo and Aquarium plan to keep the shell as an exhibit. *Source: P & J 5. 3. 05*



AQUARIA

+ British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR) attended the Dive Show in Birmingham last year and were concerned to see a large fish tank containing wild caught fish. Members of the public were able to touch the fish. Some fish died and members of BDMLR raised their concerns with the Show organisers. A company which produces interactive fish tanks using the latest video and computer animation and graphics was approached and now there will be NO live fish tank at the London Dive Show and there will be a Virtual Reality fish tank at the Birmingham Dive Show, time permitting. *Source: East Sussex Wildlife Rescue & Ambulance Service*

+ Continuing the Drumkinnon Tower proposed Zoo (and aquarium), I have a letter from West Dunbartonshire Council saying that they have received no application for these. They will keep my letter on file.

+ And an article in *Serious About News*, 22. 2. 05, says that protesters, one of them dressed as a giant fish, descended on Bedford this week objecting to plans for the Nirah (National Institute for Research into Aquatic Habitats) project which will bring giant aquariums to the area. Their leaflets claim that Nirah will be an aquatic zoo, but will also house a laboratory in which drug company and university scientists will carry out research on aquatic or semi-aquatic animals. The Mayor of Bedford insisted 'This is not going to be a vivisection type

research facility. We're talking about swabs for genetic research.' This has now gone ahead and will be the world's largest freshwater aquarium, so polite letters please to Mr S E Field, Chief Executive, Bedford Borough Council, Town Hall, St Paul's Square, Bedford MK40 1SJ
sfield@bedford.gov.uk



OYSTERS ETC.

+ The joint Marine Programme, a partnership between the Scottish wildlife Trust and WWF Scotland says that repeated and intensive dragging of heavy dredging equipment across the seabed often leaves it stripped of bottom dwelling plants and animals, destroying nursery grounds for fish and shellfish. Some Scottish scallops, mussels and oysters are collected from the wild which often means dredging for shellfish in deep water. This destroys delicate habitats and scars the seabed. *Thanks to Advocates for Animals for that item.*

+ It is a sad fact that Dylan Thomas loved oysters. Now Swansea, which has a history of oyster harvesting, wants to revive its oyster trade after an absence of more than 80 years. There is evidence that the Romans consumed vast quantities from the coastal waters in the 5th century. The harvesting continued and in 1871, 10 million oysters were scraped off the seabeds of Swansea Bay and Gower. By the turn of the century over-fishing and coastal pollution had reduced the value of the beds and they were eventually wiped out by a virus in the early 1920s. (Where have I heard all this before? Ed) Terry Scales, development officer for the Mumbles Development Trust said: 'There is a real feeling around Wales that we should develop produce (sic) like this, from our home ground.' (When will they ever learn...? Ed.) *Source: Ind. 26. 2. 05*

+ And now, an article in the *Sunday Telegraph*, 20. 3. 05, states that Casanova, the 18th century lover who used to breakfast on 50 oysters, has been vindicated by a

study that proves they really are aphrodisiacs. Apparently the creatures are full of rare amino acids in the Spring and these trigger increased levels of sex hormones! (Well, what a sad bunch of males that need oyster hormones to increase their urges. Give me good old fashioned love any day! Ed)



INTERESTING ANIMALS

+ Crabs are typical marine creatures and don't normally survive for long without water. But in some of the world's most inhospitable places species of land crabs have evolved to breathe air. There are those that survive in the Australian outback, the *Holthuisana trans versa*, sentinel crabs of north-east South Africa, which have adapted to their mud environment by evolving long eyestalks so that they can look out for predators with just one eyestalk above water, sitting in long burrows dug in the sand, and fiddler crabs, living in mangrove swamps. Sandbubbler crabs and soldier crabs live high up in the mud flats, manico crabs eat snakes and the soldier crab has possibly the most complex known lungs in an invertebrate. All land crabs have basic lungs, some breathe through their legs, but aquatic crabs just use gills. *Source: BBC Wildlife Mag, New Behaviour, Dec. 2004.*



+ Previously biologists assumed the mud on the seafloor was devoid of life. But now they estimate there could be as many species below ground in deepsea sediments as above water in our rainforests. *Source: BBC Radio 4 The Material World 27. 1. 05*
+ The fangblenny fish can change its colours at will, says a report in Nature. It can turn off its black-and-blue colours to

become brown, green or orange, adds a second body stripe and melts into shoals from which it attacks unsuspecting fish.

Source: Daily Tel. 20. 1. 05

+ Octopuses have been observed 'walking' on two tentacles as part of a strategy to avoid predators. Scientists think the strategy was developed to allow a quick escape while remaining camouflaged. This has been seen in two species: the coconut octopus from Indonesia was seen running backwards on two limbs with another six tentacles wrapped around its body, and resembling a fleeing coconut. The other species, octopus *aculeatus*, commonly coils and raises its two front arms to resemble algae. *Source: D. Tel, 25. 3. 05 and several other papers.*

REPORTS

+ From *ECOTERRA 26. 1. 05* Investigative reporting into the murky waters of East-African sea-fisheries. The battle for fish, shrimps, octopus, squid and lobster escalates in the Western Indian Ocean. Although inshore trawling was banned along the Kenyan coast, with the so called 'research permits', trawling mainly targeting the high-valued shrimps for export simply continues unabated.
+ From *Marine Life Society of South Australia Inc. newsletter, Jan 04*, A new species of scorpionfish has been found in the Indo-Pacific area, one of a rapidly growing list of more than 15,300 marine fish species now logged in the Census of Marine Life database. And the red sea urchin, found in the shallow waters of the Pacific Ocean, is one of the earth's longest-living animals. The small, spiny creature can last for more than 200 years with few signs of age-related disease.



SEALS , DOLPHINS AND WHALES

You will all have read about the dreadful Canadian seal cull, and those of you with email have already been inundated by me with requests for protest. If you haven't yet done so, PLEASE write, phone and fax the Canadian High Commission, Trafalgar Square, Consular and Passport Section,

Canada House, LONDON SW1Y 5BJ,
Tel: 020 7258 6600 fax: 020 7258 6533.
Tell them politely how shocked you are at
this dreadful and unnecessary massacre,
and that 95% of the 350,00 seals to be
killed are less than 4 weeks old.

+ There are spatial and temporal links
between some mass strandings of
cetaceans, mainly beaked whales, and the
deployment of military sonar. There is
evidence of acute and chronic tissue
damage in stranded cetaceans that results
from the formation *in vivo* of gas bubbles,
challenging the view that these mammals
do not suffer decompression sickness. The
incidence of such cases during a naval
sonar exercise indicates that acoustic
factors could be important in the aetiology
of bubble-related disease and may call for
further environmental regulation of such
activity. *Source: taken from Nature, Vol*
425, 9. 10. 03., With thanks to Preserve,
IOW Spring 05.

However, from the office of the Green
MEPs, Euro-MPs have voted to ban
military sonar devices that are killing
marine mammals.

+ At least 20 pairs of French trawlers fish
the Channel and a few Scottish pair
trawlers. They trail huge nets between and
behind them, hauling in about every eight
hours. British pair trawlers accounted for
the death of an estimated 400-plus dolphins
last year. They drown tangled in the nets
because they have to surface for air every
six minutes or so. Campaigners say 2,000
die every year. Dolphins, found in almost
all the oceans, can be taught complex tasks.
Researchers say their intelligence is greater
than that of dogs. (And that of humans too,
if all we can think of is to teach them silly
tasks! Ed) *Source: Ind. 26. 3. 05*

SELLING LIVE SHELLFISH

We are still unclear whether Morrisons,
who have taken over Safeways, and Tesco
are still selling live shellfish including
oysters and mussels. We are in contact
with Animal Aid, Advocates for Animals
and People for the Ethical Treatment of
Animals (PETA) on this, but have heard

nothing further. Will update when we
know more. Ed.



ENVIRONMENT

A recent dispute between the shellfish
industry and the Food Standards Agency
over the accuracy of tests to detect toxins in
shellfish almost ended in the courts. This
was also a problem in Ireland, until a series
of meetings between regulators, scientists
and the industry engaged in 'free and frank
exchanges of views'. Eventually a safety
committee was formed with the shared
realisation that the goal was the same for
everyone – the provision of safe food.
(Beans on toast – now there's a safe food,
with no diarrhetic shellfish poisoning,
paralytic shellfish poisoning or amnesic
shellfish poisoning! Ed.) *Full report from*
Captive animals' Protection Society, with
thanks.

+ Britain's marine life is being threatened
by man's exploitation of the seas. A report
by the WWF shows that 13 out of the 16
species surveyed by its scientists are in
decline. Included are the common skate,
prawn stock and the basking shark which is
being 'run over' in busy shipping lanes.
Horse mussel beds are being dredged until
they disappear. *Source: Sunday Times, 16.*
1. 05.

+ According to the Washington Post,
aquaculture (fish farming) is the fastest
growing agriculture segment in the US.
Aquaculture critics say that bacteria created
by excess feed and waste from fish farming
may lead to devastating effects for wild
marinelife. *Source: Farmed Animal Watch*
25. 1. 05.

+ And from the *Daily Telegraph, 4. 2. 04,*
an article states that acid seas will kill off
coral within 70 years. It also says that cod
could be replaced by jellyfish. This is all
caused by the build-up of carbon dioxide in
the atmosphere. But on a *BBC2 Newsnight*
programme, 1. 2. 05, the estimate is that the
reefs could go in 30 years. A further article
in the *Sunday Times, 20. 2. 05* says that fish

are becoming increasingly toxic because of contamination from man-made chemicals. Levels of organohalogens are rising, cannot be broken down but can be passed from mothers to their young during pregnancy and through breast milk.

+ Greenpeace is pioneering a campaign for marine reserves, which are essentially national parks at sea. If you are interested in supporting them contact Greenpeace on freephone 0800 269 065.

+ Environmental disaster is looming in the Galapagos Islands, the Pacific archipelago whose unique wildlife inspired Darwin's theory of evolution. The island's 1,000 fishermen want to introduce long-lining, a technique involving lines many miles long holding hundreds of thousands of baited hooks, which catch and kill as many birds and animals as the fish that are targeted.

Source: Ind. 31. 3. 05

ANIMAL SENTIENCE

It seems that a fierce debate is raging about whether fish are sentient beings that feel pain. Scientists are realising that fish are much smarter than most of us give them credit for, says Sanjida O'Connell in the *Daily telegraph*, 2. 3. 05. Now, at a forthcoming conference on sentience in domesticated animals, an expert is to argue that what really matters is not IQ but emotions, and that fish can suffer as much as birds and many mammals. Of course, the other side argue that because fish don't have the brain hardware they don't suffer. It would seem that science always has to prove something, and if it can't be proved then it isn't there. I would argue that if you can't prove they do feel pain, then equally you can't prove that they don't! Why we have to prove all this in animals is beyond me. As I pointed out to the Committee on the new Animals Welfare Bill, if I kicked them all in the shins I couldn't prove that they were feeling pain. They could tell me, but that's all. Animals don't even have that luxury! Compassion in World Farming Trust has done some excellent papers in Animal Sentience, including on invertebrates. This includes slugs, spiders, ants, snails and so on. Each creature shows

a unique attitude towards awareness and should be cherished for its own sake. We don't need to inject bee venom into the mouth of a fish in order to evaluate its reaction. Ugh! Ed.



POEMS

Take one home for the kiddies

On shallow straw in shadeless glass,
Huddled by empty bowls, they sleep,
No dark, no dawn, no earth, no grass –
Mam, get us one of them to keep.

Living toys are something novel
But it soon wears off somehow
Fetch the shoebox, fetch the shovel
Mam, we're playing funerals now.

Phillip Larkin

(Thanks to supporter Mrs. Callant for those)

Here Yesterday...

Bruised and battered
Over the millennia
Strong shaped crustacean
Crushed past and shattered

Under defences defiant
And ancient
To tiny small creatures
Not always triumphant

Considered by some
Our oldest inheritance
Even they may not know
Just when they began.

But with many others
Most worthy of respect
Now we must wonder
What ails our human brothers?

John Amsden

Just a thought – if you have an email address but are not on my list, do let me know. It is quicker and cheaper to contact you that way, and means I can irritate you more often with requests for polite letters of protest!! Ed.