

THE SHELLFISH NETWORK
NEWSLETTER, Autumn 2005



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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.



Hi, folks. Another wonderful three months from you all, with terrific donations and lots of info. and clippings. We had a really good day at the London Vegan Festival at Kensington Town Hall, with lots of interest and support. It is surprising how many of the children are fascinated by the crustacea (plastic lobsters, crabs etc.) that I have on the stall. And of course they love the shells. I am hoping to take the stall into Primary schools again this year as there is always such a positive response.

Talking of positive responses – having written once again to the relevant people at Westminster regarding the new Animal Welfare Bill, and hearing nothing, and to the Scottish people and getting back a long waffle about needing more scientific evidence to prove (!) that shellfish are capable of feeling pain, I am beginning to think that there is a whole host of people out there who do not understand what compassion is all about. If

you've ever watched a lobster desperately trying to escape from boiling water then who on earth needs 'scientific evidence'? We are still politely pushing the cause, armed with enormous amounts of evidence not only for aquatic invertebrates, but invertebrates in general. Advocates for Animals (AfA), Edinburgh have produced an excellent document 'Cephalopods and Decapod Crustaceans, their capacity to experience pain and suffering'. Well worth reading. Contact 0131 225 6039

info@advocatesforanimals.org.

AfA also have a mention in *Third Force News*, 19.8.05 arguing that lobsters and crabs have feelings and that Westminster and the Scottish Executive should recognise this potential for suffering and include them in the new Animal Welfare Bills.



LOBSTERS, CRABS AND CRAYFISH

Advocates for Animals is extremely disappointed that lobsters, crabs and octopuses are not included in the Bill's definition of 'animal'. New Zealand and parts of Australia include these creatures in their animal protection legislation but the Scottish executive (and Westminster) have left them without any legal protection. Around 750,000 lobsters and 15 million crabs are caught each year in Scotland. (Thanks Fran and others for this info). + New York City – More cases of torn lobsters at restaurants. Coldwaters Restaurants cut open and douse them in scalding butter when alive, then they go to the broiler still twitching. NY jurisdiction does not allow for assistance.

Source: Preserve, IOW, Autumn 05

+ An article in *Telegraph Weekend*, 30.7.05 talks of 'how to buy good food with peace of mind and a clear conscience'. This time it is on crab and lobster. It states that the Marine Conservation Society reports that stocks of lobster are at a quarter of their potential level, but that the species is not endangered. The same with crabs. It goes on to describe the killing and cooking of these poor creatures (implying that they need not be cooked alive, but pointing out that most fish sellers sell them

alive.) The article does advocate freezing for 2 hours, and says that 'putting crustaceans in cold water and bringing them to the boil is not humane'. (I suppose it is a start! Ed.)

+ And here's part of a delightful little article sent from Herma, written by Cornelia Dean, www.nytimes.com/2005/08/09/science... all about the lobster lifestyle. It seems the female prefers the male with the most luxurious home and then entices him with her scent – pheromones in her urine - according to Jelle Atema, who is a biologist with the Boston University Marine Program. Once the male is smitten, their foreplay is elaborate, beginning with a mock boxing match and ending with the male stroking the female 'tenderly', people who have seen it say. The female sheds her shell and as soon as she is strong enough the male turns her on her back and they mate. After a few days when her shell has hardened, she leaves.

+ Sadly, here is yet another horrible tale of gorging humanity – according to the *Herald Sun News*, 15. 8. 05 – Sonya Thomas consumed 5.13 kg of lobster meat, breaking the old record of 4.43kg she set last year. This was the equivalent of 113 lobsters. (And still 30,000 children died yesterday of malnutrition and 30,000 more will die today...)

+A thief, who stuffed a pair of live lobsters from their tank in a Bristol supermarket into his pants, learned that crime doesn't pay when the creatures gave him a vasectomy. They were removed when emergency medics pried them loose with pliers. (Sent from Linda, no more info. but many thanks. Ed.)



+ The *Guildford Environmental Forum (GEF) newsletter Sept. 05* included an item by a Forum member on edible food packaging. Apparently scientists at the University of Oregon have developed a food wrap made from the lysozyme in egg whites mixed with chitosan extracted from crab and shrimp shells. (I hope the ingredients are listed, as it is quite common to be allergic to chitosan! Ed)

+ Another article in the *Telegraph Weekend*, 3.9.05 discusses the American signal crayfish, who were introduced into Britain for farming but were either released or escaped in the 1970s. This has caused a disaster for our smaller, native crayfish, but Julian Rollins insists that 'there's good eating in those claws'. It seems, however, that where signals have reached high proportions, anglers have deserted the canals. André Grandjean, secretary of the Basingstoke Canal says 'we have been losing members because of this, when anglers get a bite they want to know that it is a fish on the end, not something with two great claws.' (I wonder what the fish thinks of who is at the other end of the fishing rod? It probably wishes for two great claws of its own! Ed.)



ABOUT THE LITTLE SHELLFISH.

According to the *Daily Telegraph*, 19.9.05, hurricane Katrina has left the local shellfish industry in tatters. Peter Jackson, managing director of Aon's consumer products, said: 'The Gulf of Mexico provided about 30% of the US shrimp market but the harvest has been completely devastated and will probably never recover'. A spokesperson for Wal-Mart said 'Hurricane Katrina impacted some of our local suppliers for oysters from the gulf, but we're still able to get the product (sic) from suppliers on the West and East coasts.' (Why do people still insist on calling these living creatures "products"? Ed.)

+ A Chinese gangmaster accused of causing the death of at least 21 cockle-pickers in Morecambe Bay pressed survivors of the disaster to pin the blame on two of the men who had drowned, it was alleged. Lin Liang Ren drove the cocklers to the beds last year, but fled when the tide engulfed them, leaving the pickers to die, Preston Crown court heard. *Source: Independent, 20.9.05*

+ Shellfish farmers along the west coast of Scotland are about to reap the benefits from a £1million a year deal agreed with Tesco. *Source: Aberdeen Press & Journal, 17.6.05.* Sadly a letter back from Tesco, after enquiries regarding the selling of live shellfish, says that

the creatures are ‘covered with a clean damp cloth to keep any draughts off them and kept in the chiller each night until sold or disposed of at end of code.’ The letter goes on to say that seafood is to be disposed of by bagging up, weighing, recorded as waste and put in the compactor. Presumably they do mean already dead seafood. (*Thanks to Pauline and others for that, Ed.*)

+ Here is another sick joke. Scientists have found the secret to perfect scampi – making sure the creatures do not get stressed. (I thought that these little creatures were perfect anyway. Perfect when alive and swimming, that is! Ed.) These wonderfully clever scientists have discovered that the shellfish lose their sweet (sic) flavour if they are trawled along in nets for a long time after being caught. They become anxious, which causes them to burn up their sugar reserves. And – I really don’t believe this – the seafood firm Young’s, which supplies the UK supermarkets with frozen scampi, has now asked scientists to hold regular stress clinics for the fish. Blood samples will be taken from them and tested for stress hormones. The researchers will experiment to see if different catching methods help the scampi to ‘relax’ and make a tastier meal. *Source: P & J, 18.7.05.* (And, of course, we know of an even easier way to help the creatures to relax – LEAVE THEM ALONE!! I wonder how much tax payers’ money goes into this intellectual haven of perspicuity? Reminds me of the fact that biro pens don’t work in space. The Americans spent ages trying to invent a pen that worked. The Russians used pencils! Ed.)



+ In *The Wednesday Book, Independent, 20.7.05* there is a review of ‘Last Chance to Eat’ by Gina Mallet. Reviewer Christopher Hirst explains that the book is partly ‘an appalled exploration of the chemical and biological shortcuts devised by the modern food industry.’ He explains that Mallet explores ‘such unpalatable aspects of modern gastronomy as farmed salmon (“the colour is

chosen from salmofan, a colour swatch from the chemical giant Hoffmann-La Roche”) and scallops: “often kept moist by sodium tri-polyphosphate—the active ingredient in paint strippers.”...She’ll also make you wary of deeply coloured egg yolks and cherry-red tuna, not to mention the roe of warm-water scallops. They can induce “paralytic poison shock”, which is why Americans won’t touch them.’

+ The first weekend in September was the time for the Woburn Oyster Festival. It seems from the *Milton Keynes Ladies & Gentlemen Local News* that ‘The festival is not just about oysters (although 8,000 were consumed last year) as a variety of other foods and drink...



VARIOUS

The sex life of the giant squid was at last revealed in the *Independent, 2.10.05!* A little too graphic to include here, but the female is about one third larger than her partner and is often resistant to his advances. The male, what with one thing and another, has a pretty difficult time of it. David Randall writes: ‘Scientists used to think that the most chaotic love lives in the world were lived by certain marsupials, supermodels and Premiership footballers. Not any more. New research has emerged which shows that when it comes to an eventful sex life, nothing can compare with a giant squid.’ (Whatever the case, they are certainly beautiful and amazing creatures. Ed.)

+ A rare albino sea urchin has been trawled from the depths of a Highland sea loch. Fisherman Mark Wiseman, who discovered the creature and is keeping it alive in a holding tank, says he has never seen a white sea urchin before. The Natural History Museum spokesperson suggested that the urchin’s appearance was probably caused by ‘a blip in the genes’. Mr Wiseman has called the urchin Snowy. *Source: Independent, 26.9.05*

+ An unidentified article was sent to me headed ‘Maggots Bather is Crushed’ It explains that a heart patient is banned from raising cash for charity by sitting in a bath of maggots – because it would be cruel. Town hall chiefs told Ron Reeves the stunt would breach animal welfare if a maggot was hurt or

caused distress. Ron said: 'If I injure, squash or upset a maggot I can be prosecuted.' A spokesman said: 'People should take whatever action they can to protect living beings from abuse.' (Here, here, Ed!) However...the council is currently running a 'Fishing4u' play scheme in which youngsters are supplied with live bait...

+ At least 20 of the world's 33 known sea horse species face extinction, due to the trade of live animals for aquariums and dried sea horses for use in Chinese medicine, according to the *Independent*, 16.8.05.



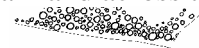
FISH, WHALES ETC

+Trevor Page, a Fish dealer from Lowestoft, planned to catch and kill about 300 sharks in British waters each week to promote them as the 'new cod'. However, catches were found to be too small to make the business viable! So, no more tope fishing for Trevor. *Source: East Anglia Animal Rights Coalition, 27.9.05.* The tope shark, or *Galeorhinus galeus*, is also known as the soupfin shark and is not protected by law. It feeds on fish and crustaceans. It seems that Mr Page had drawn up a contract to export dorsal fins to restaurateurs in Hong Kong and the rest of China. (Thanks to *Mark and Linda*. Ed.)

+ In the Kola Peninsula, western oil companies are constructing a new, underwater oil pipeline. However, the area is a breeding ground for Blue Whales and they are endangered by this activity. Environmental NGOs are campaigning for the diversion of the route of the pipeline, as well as having campaigned against the construction of the pipeline in the first place. The Kola Peninsular is in the Arctic area of North Russia. Tankers cannot operate for an extended period of the year as there is only a short summer period where the ice has melted. There is also, therefore, a risk of the pipeline being damaged and also polluting the marine environment. My thanks to an article by Peter J. Morey in *Preserve, newsletter of the IOW Animal Preservation & Action Group, Summer 05.* An article in the *Daily Telegraph*, 30.7.05 also discusses Shell's Sakhalin project, which aims

to tap 4billion barrels of oil and gas under Russia's east coast. After agreeing to move a pipeline earlier in the year to safeguard a population of Pacific grey whales, Shell is now being accused of destroying local fish populations. Pacific Environment, a green lobby group, said Shell and its partners had already begun dumping 71m cubic feet of dredging waste into Aniva Bay, in the south of Sakhalin. 'This is polluting delicate fisheries for crab, scallop, krill and sole...the group said.

+ In August, the *Independent* (8.8.05) wrote an article 'The great British shark hunt' in which it explains that Britain has its own sharks – dogfish, skates and rays! It seems that simply by wandering up and down the beach and poking about in the weeds on the strand with a stick you can contribute more to shark knowledge than any amount of time 'eyeballing' a great white from a cage. It is called the Great Eggcase Hunt. Unlike tropical sharks, which give birth to live young, the British dogfish and rays lay eggs. These look rather like a parcel of ravioli with horns on the four corners, and are known as mermaid's purses. Skate eggs, which can be as big as an A4 bag, have short, stumpy horns like a bull. The cuckoo ray has beautiful long horns, which look like the handles of a barrow from the side. The most common one, with medium-sized horns, belongs to the thornback ray, which is the harmless version of the manta ray. The empty cases float to land once the baby has emerged and dry to a blackened, feather-light crisp. They are mainly found where there are cliffs or dunes, and when soaked in a bucket overnight the cases regain their olive-green colour and pasta-like consistency. The Hunt is being organised by the Shark Trust, which looks after the interests of sharks and their relatives in Britain and across the world.



ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Once again, a marine biologist is calling for the urgent installation of satellite tracking technology on board all large trawlers to stop the destruction of ancient cold-water coral reefs. Dr Jason Hall-Spencer, of the University

of Portsmouth, believes only the establishment of deep-water conservation areas and use of black box-style equipment can save the corals that provide habitats for hundreds of unknown species. *Sources: Daily telegraph, 5.9.05 and Animal Aid newsletter.*

+ In a special report by Andrew Buncombe and Severin Carrell – climate change, the *Independent on Sunday, 2.10.05*, discusses global warming in an article entitled ‘Melting Planet’. It says that polar bears are drowning and thousands of other creatures are disappearing. The erosion of polar ice is the first break in a fragile chain of life extending across the planet, from bears in the north to penguins in the far south. Scientists warn that the vast majority are migratory animals – sperm whales, polar bears, gazelles, garden birds and turtles – whose survival depends on the intricate web of habitats, food supplies and weather conditions which, for some species, can stretch for 6,500 miles. Every link of that chain is slowly but perceptibly altering.

+ The IOW P&A Group have produced an excellent set of leaflets on endangered Sea Life. Contact me if you would like the set of three. Ed.

+ Another article in the *Ind. 29.7.05* describes how the number of fish species has fallen dramatically over the past half century. It states that up to half of ocean species have been lost to overfishing. Dr Boris Worm of Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, said there was now a clear link between overfishing and the shrinking of the ocean regions where most fish tended to congregate, known as “hot spots”. ‘Everywhere you go, in every ocean basin, our hot spots today are only relics of what was once there. It really hurts to see this,’ he said.

+ Also in the *Ind. 2.10.05*, the number of male green turtles is falling because of rising temperatures, and the reproduction of the sperm whale, whose main food source is the squid, is cut because of the fall in its food supplies. Plankton and krill, key foods for many cetaceans such as the pilot whale, have in some regions declined 100-fold in warmer water. In the *Telegraph 3.8.05* scientists reveal that the seas of the ancient mariner have

been devastated with the scale of damage caused by humans to the oceans. For instance, while there are fewer than a million green turtles in the Caribbean today, recent estimates suggest that at the time of Christopher Columbus, there were 50 to 100 million.



+ Not only that, but the Government is to conduct new research into levels of mercury in fish amid claims that children who eat too much tuna may develop learning difficulties. It seems that tuna flesh becomes contaminated more than most fish (!) with mercury from polluted waters. *Source: Sunday Times, 7.8.05*

+ Eoin Fairgrieve, a professional angler, has launched Tweedstart, a project to halt the declining popularity of fly-fishing. Based on the Tweed, near Kelso, it aims to offer free tuition to youngsters. He says ‘We will be teaching people not just about how to catch fish but the wider principles (sic). It is one of the best ways to teach people about their environment. It is not just a question of catching fish but an appreciation of the ecosystem and habitat and husbandry.’ *Source: Ind. 23.8.05* (How come my grandchildren know about these things without ever having caught or killed anything? Are you sure it is the ‘best way’, Eoin? Ed.)



+ However, all is not doom and gloom. An expedition to survey life under the Arctic ice has surprised scientists with an abundance of ocean creatures, including several new species of jellyfish, sea cucumbers and brittle worms, together with 50 species such as squid and octopus, never before recorded in the Arctic. The expedition surveyed marine life in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas and the Canada Basin, a vast underwater bowl. The scientists sampled the entire water column from the ice itself, where a species of cod hides from seals and where crustaceans feed, down to depths of 11,000ft. Apparently, along with underwater sea mounts and the seas under the Antarctic ice, they turn out to be one of the last retreats

of biological diversity. Dr Ron D'Or, the chief scientist of marine census said, 'One of the reasons for doing this, which I find a little worrying, was to get a baseline because the ice is expected to melt in the next 20 years... We found so many species never described before in the Arctic that it makes you wonder if warming trends are not bringing in species from outside the Arctic already.' *Source: Tel. 30.7.05*

+ I am still waiting to hear if Drumkinnon Tower, Loch Lomond Shores, Balloch have been granted a licence to open a zoo. Ed.

+ Many of you contact me about restaurants which keep live lobsters in tanks. Do keep me informed and either I will send you a copy of our Guidelines to take in person to the restaurant, or I will send them a copy. There is, of course, no 'compassionate' way of killing a lobster, but at present we can at least make them as comfortable as possible

+ An excellent article by Tony Wardle in *Viva!LIFE, Summer 2005*, describes the amount of toxins which are polluting the entire globe, particularly the oceans, and are present in almost all sea creatures, including those which people eat. He explains that these compounds are extremely long-lasting and are going to be around for decades. As China and India industrialise, so new sources will come on stream and the situation is likely to get worse. These include organochlorine pollutants, known as POPs. Of particular concern are PCBs and dioxin. They are absorbed by plants and small organisms and are then concentrated as they work up the food chain, especially in the flesh of oily fish. They can cause a range of cancers, birth defects, attack the central nervous system, produce a 'gender bending' effect in children, weaken the immune system and promote a string of other deadly ailments. And yet the Government's Food Standards Agency (FSA) persists in promoting fish, encouraging everyone to eat at least two portions of oily fish every week.

However, that is the maximum recommendation. Eat more than this and you risk damaging your health.

+ I have been sent some very moving alternative words to well known Carols, which

were sung in Parliament Square some years ago. (thanks Val). The last verse sung to '**In the Bleak Midwinter**' is as follows:

Can we sing of goodwill,
Love and peace to all.
And not let that blessing,
On all creatures fall.
If through their sad eyes
The world we could but see,
How great their pain and suffering,
How deep our shame would be.

And to '**It came Upon a Midnight Clear**:

The birds that fly across the sky
The creatures of the sea.
And they who move upon the earth,
Abused they should not be.
They have a natural span of life,
The same as you and me.
And as with us they have the right,
That span of life to see.

There are several more if you would like to contact me for the words.

Shellfish

Many their numbers
Yet in ages ago
Their forms are now strange
Such memories now gone

Yet in their time
They covered sands
And mounts of their own now
Conformed differently in different lands

But never in terror
Did they know what human hand
Could do to their seas or strands and killing
The world and their well-shielded band

Could never imagine a mammal
So strange to desert the life
Of the seas and the trees
Where terrestrial terrorism is rife.

John Amsden

+ You might like to log on to EVANA, the European Vegetarian & Animal News Agency www.evana.org. Info in English, German, French and Italian. Lots of interesting info. Ed.