

THE SHELLFISH NETWORK
NEWSLETTER, SPRING 2006



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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.



HAPPY NEW YEAR

Well, you have all surpassed yourselves with items, donations and general support. We are overwhelmed by your generosity. Thanks to you all. You might like to know that a book of animal poems by our resident poet John Amsden is available, (£1.95) and we are now in the process of producing a small book of poems by him on the subject of the sea. This should be available by the Spring.



CRABS

*Hundreds of giant freshwater crabs have invaded the heart of Rome, threatening to interrupt the work of archaeologists who are excavating the city's subterranean treasures. The size of the average fully grown male *potamon fluviatile* is 5cm, but the Roman crabs grow to 7cm. Negotiations are under way with Rome's archaeological authorities

to find a way to preserve the colony of crabs without halting their work. (Source: *Daily Telegraph*, 1. 1. 05)

* According to *The Ecologist*, Oct. 05, some hermit crabs harvest sea anemones and stick them to their shells. In return, the anemone gets scraps of food and protection from its own predators, which the crab fends off. Hermit crabs are very finicky, preferring to squeeze into shells that are too small rather than wear a shell of the right size that has a hole in it. Some hydroids, which are related to jellyfish, corals and sea anemones, prefer to settle on shells occupied by hermit crabs. As the crabs scuttle about the baby hydroids are attracted by the motion and it is mutually convenient. Hydroids have a powerful venom that might discourage anyone in the mood for a hermit-crab sandwich.

* The tropical Christmas Island, owned by Australia but close to Java, is home to 40 million bright red crabs. Their yearly journey from the interior's rainforests to the coast to spawn is regarded by wildlife watchers as a wonder of the natural world. The crabs are already at risk from yellow crazy ants, a non-native species which has wiped out an estimated 20million by squirting them with formic acid. But now the animals are threatened by plans for new phosphate mines. A spokesperson for Christmas Island Phosphates said that 'no doubt some crabs will get squashed, but none of the areas we are talking about has a high density of crabs.' However, Peter Green, a biologist who has lived on the Island for seven years, said the area under threat was pristine rainforest with a huge crab population. He added that Christmas Island should phase out phosphate mining and turn to eco-tourism instead.

(Source: *Daily telegraph*, 8. 12. 05)

* Alex Kapranos in *The Guardian*, 21. 10. 05, describes how he has slaughtered thousands of crustaceans in kitchens. He says that crabs sense death. 'Five of them on their backs...Between their legs is a frilled flap protecting their genitalia. Little on the guys, big on the girls. Rip it off. Now they know. Flailing in fear and agony. Cleaver cleaves. Precise. Split the shell. Tear the legs. Clean

the dead man's fingers. Toss in the wok. Compassion? What?' (I think that says it all – sorry folks. Ed.)



LOBSTERS ETC

* There are, of course, many articles on how to cook, dress and eat lobsters, too many to mention. In *The Daily Tel.* 29. 10. 05, there is an article on the cheapness of lobster today, also saying that it is 'the most nutritious of all foods – high in protein, low in fat and with less cholesterol per pound than lean beef.' (Not to mention the mercury, lead and all the other heavy metals ingested on the seabed! Ed.) It goes on to say that 'These exemplary creatures mate for life, walking together along the sea-bed, claw in claw, for hundreds of miles. When lobster strangers meet, they run a pincer over each other's backs in greeting. How much they have to teach mankind about morality and civility.' (The effect is spoiled by the writer adding how unkind it is of the Creator to have made them so delicious... Learning civility seems to be beyond some people's capabilities! Ed.)

* Sadly, also in the same *Telegraph*, the report states that the sales of supermarket lobster are up by 20% in a year, not less because the stores take all the effort out of the cooking. (Presumably the general public is squeamish about torturing the poor animal for themselves – leave it to the professionals! Ed.)

* It seems that vast stretches of Scotland's coastline could be turned into environmentally (sic) friendly lobster ranches following the success of the country's first artificial reef. Scientists behind the project at Loch Linnhe claim the structure, made from 10,000 tonnes of concrete blocks, (way hey for the CO2 emissions! Ed.) has increased the amount of sealife in the area sixteenfold since work began in 2002. Numbers of lobster, cod and shellfish have increased dramatically thanks to the new habitat. 'A plan is already being drawn up for a similar reef off the coast

of Aberdeen, and representatives from Scotland's beleaguered fishing industry are keen to use the technique to farm lobster.' (Source: *The Sunday times*, 6. 11. 05, and thanks to *Advocates for Animals* for the info.) (Isn't it a pity that whenever it seems that humans have done something good for wildlife, it usually means that it is simply for ending up on somebody's plate. Ed.)

* It seems that we are having some effect in Scotland – MSPs are considering placing lobsters and crabs on a protected list, in order to ban the boiling alive of these poor creatures. Of course some top chefs branded the move as 'potty'. (Well, they would, wouldn't they? Inevitably one said that there are far more pressing issues to worry about. I have never understood this argument – where do you draw the line on compassion? Because lots of things are wrong it doesn't make one of them right! Ed.) (Source: *Daily record*, 28. Nov. 05 and again thanks to *A. for Animals*)

* However, Whole Foods Market, the world's leading natural and organic foods supermarket, has announced that it has set a deadline of June 15, 06 to assess and significantly upgrade the supply chain process to procure and sell live lobsters in a more humane way. If more compassionate standards are not implemented by that date, WFM will discontinue the sale of live lobsters.

* And, inevitably, in *The Shooting Times and Country Magazine*, 10. 11. 05, the writer states that 'a basket ' (full of live crayfish)' lowered into the boiling, seasoned water serves as the perfect cooking method. – Mind your fingers! Crayfish may not be big, but their claws are.' (There's always hope...! Ed.)



LITTLE CREATURES

* A bizarre species of 'zombie' worm that feeds on the bones of dead whales has been discovered living in the relative shallows of the North Sea. The new worm belongs to a group called the Annelids, which includes the

common earthworm. The scientists have called the worm *Osedax mucofloris*, which means bone-eating snot flower. 'We sometimes called them snot worms because when they retreat into their tubes they leave mucus behind which is probably a defensive mechanism,' said Dr. Glover, a marine biologist at the Natural History Museum in London. Last year scientists found similar organisms feeding on the bones of dead whales buried at depths of 2,500 metres. But the two species are genetically distinct. 'The worms have bacteria in their tissues which they use to degrade the oil [from the bone] to produce energy. *Osedax* has no mouth or intestines and derives all its food from these symbiotic bacteria that the worm has somehow managed to acquire during its development,' Dr. Glover explained. (*Source, Independent, 19. 10. 05*)

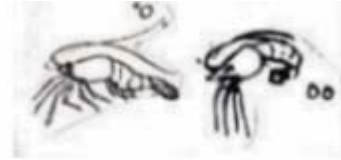
*Also in *The Independent, 15. 12. 05*, an undersea 'census' has discovered a menagerie of new marine creatures, but has also mapped a 'dead zone' where the Boxing day tsunami killed everything in its path. Among the creatures was *physonect siphonophore*, a colonial organism resembling a jellyfish, but looking more like a foxglove. Also was a new species of comb jelly and many others, all strangely beautiful.

*The stock market's only bull semen supplier, Genus, is to diversify into pig breeding with the acquisition of Sygen, to create a 'world leading animal genetics company'. Sygen also has a prawn breeding business. It breeds better (sic) creatures and supplies them in post-larval state, as tiny tadpole-like prawns. Sygen had been seen as a bid target for the global giant Monsanto. (*Source: Ind. 29. 10. 05*)

*Bullet-proof glass had to be installed at the Blue Reef Aquarium, in Newquay, when Bruce, a 13cm-tall pistol shrimp, recently moved in. Bruce has a punch so powerful it is equivalent to the force of gun shot. He is named after Bruce Lee, the martial arts legend. (*Source: The Funday Times, children's paper with Sunday Times, 6. 11. 05*)

* Over-farming of shrimp is leading to 'dead zones' in the ocean – places where the natural

habitat is being killed off by the by-products of shrimp farms. Shrimp eaters are being advised to buy only 'free range'. (Better still, leave them free to range! Ed.) Thanks to Rachel for that.



TRADE

*The west coast of Scotland is one of Europe's prime locations for shellfish. Paul Kenny, proprietor of AA Kenny & Son Shellfish buys live shellfish including periwinkles, mussels, whelks, lobsters and crabs. West Scotland's cockle beds have been closed for several years but Paul Kenny hopes to get them reopened soon. Global warming is taking its toll, however. Shellfish such as winkles are very susceptible to water temperature and Kenny says that in the last 10 years the temperature has increased by a degree or two and they have started to shift further north. (Keep going, boys and girls! Ed.) (*Source, Daily Tel, Weekend, 29. 10. 05*)

* Youngs Bluecrest Seafood Ltd intends transferring production of smoked fish from Hull to Fraserburgh in Scotland. Managing director Peter Ward that that it is regrettable that they have had to take this decision, particularly since the chilled seafood market is growing well at the moment. (*Source: BBC News 17. 10. 05*)

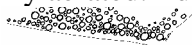
* New EU rules mean that Scottish shellfish may go on a 900-mile round trip in order to comply with new legislation which says that shellfish must be bought from a wholesaler. In one case, langoustines came ashore five miles away from the Turnberry resort, were then taken to Billingsgate Market in London, a fish supplier in Eyemouth on the east coast and an Edinburgh wholesaler. By the time the animals had finished their two-day trek – just a few miles from where they started, they were in no state to be served to customers, and went in the bin. (*Source: Scotland on Sunday 30. 10. 05*)

AQUARIA

* The local councils in Bedfordshire, who are backing the building of the world's largest freshwater aquarium, that would also house an animal research lab, (the NIRAH Project) are finding themselves in trouble. The Mayor of Bedford, who is also a major supporter of the aquarium, is under investigation by the Standards Board for England, the local government watchdog, after accusing an animal rights group of being 'fascists' who 'terrorised' opponents. The Local Govt. Ombudsman has forced Beds CC to make a written apology and donate £50 to Bedford Animal Action (BAA) after the council failed to even acknowledge repeated requests for the council to provide a representative for a public meeting BAA held about the Project.

* The zoo's trade body in Britain, BIAZA, has finally published its report on aquaria, almost a year after the Captive Animals Protection Society (CAPS) study which criticised aquaria for huge animal welfare and conservation problems. Inevitably, the Zoos Forum is made up mostly of members of the zoo community, and have decided that the current zoo licensing and inspection regime is 'sufficient to regulate aquariums appropriately to maintain standards'. (Both above articles from *Release*, *CAPS News*, *Winter 05*)

* Incidentally, if you do see poor aquaria such as small fish tanks etc. in your travels, please let CAPS or me know with details. CAPS can be contacted at PO Box 573, Preston PR1 9WW, phone/Fax: 0845 330 3911, www.captiveanimals.org. Thanks. There is no law against the little tanks they keep in places such as doctors' and dentists waiting rooms or even in shops, but they must be clean and properly aerated. Ed.



ENVIRONMENT

* A ban on beluga caviare import was announced by the US in September. The beluga sturgeon, from which the prized roe comes, is the largest of the species, and is now the rarest, all of which are in decline.

The Convention on International Trade in endangered species (Cites) says the Caspian population has dropped by half in the past five years and the Black Sea's by a fifth. A single fish can produce up to seven million eggs a year, but it is still in rapid decline due to over fishing. (Well, there's a surprise! Ed.) (*Source: Daily Tel. 29. 9. 05*)

* The Amazonian rainforest is being destroyed at double the rate of all previous estimates, according to research published in the journal *Science*. And as a result of shallow water heating up in one of the worst Amazon droughts in decades, millions of fish are dead and dying. The picture in *The Guardian*, 21. 10. 05, shows a man in a boat rowing his way through a sea of dead fish.

* And according to international scientists half of the world's coral reefs could be dead in 40 years unless measures were taken to protect them against climate change and pollution. The head of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) marine programme, Carl Gustaf Lundin, said that up to 20% of reefs had, in effect, already been destroyed. A principal reason, he said, was rising sea temperatures, which can cause coral bleaching – a phenomenon that results from the loss of microscopic algae that live inside coral and help it survive. Achim Steiner, IUCN's director general said that the situation in oceans around the world is deteriorating, and at an escalating pace. (*Source: The Ind. 26. 10. 05*)

* A government agency told people yesterday to continue eating fish despite a call by scientists for a ban on fishing for an unprecedented number of species. (*Source: Daily Tel. 22. 10. 05*)

* Even with the headlamp the girls have, in the bleak ocean depths it is difficult to meet boys down there in the gloom, so when the tiny male angler fish meets the huge female he does his best never to let go. He takes a bite out of her side, then hangs on – for so long his jaw fuses with her skin. As he has no digestive system he lives off her blood supply, but over time he wastes away until he is just a pair of gonads stuck to her side! (*Source: Ind. 9. 11. 05*)

* In Rome goldfish may no longer be given out as contest prizes. The new rules for animals were drafted by the city of Rome's Office for animal rights. The unusually strict measure is winning plaudits from AR activists but snarls from pet shop owners. (Source: *MENTAYFLOR The World*, 13. 11. 05)

* Advertisements which show goldfish in such things as electric light bulbs, although not real at present, are NOT a good idea. Some joker somewhere is bound to think this fun and put them in tiny containers. Please keep an eye open for any such, and complain to the company if you are able. (Explain why and always politely!)

* Tests are under way to find out what caused the death of 10,000 bream in a 50-metre stretch of the Grand Union canal near Tring in Hertfordshire. Officers at the scene did not see any signs of fish in distress. (Source: *BBC News*, 1. 12. 05)



* There are presently over 65 open net cage fish farms currently operating in the coastal waters of British Columbia, producing waste that is equivalent in volume to the raw sewage released from a city of 500,000 inhabitants. It could get a lot worse if industry is allowed to add new farms. (Source: *Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform*, 16. 12. 05)

* Environmentalists have accused European fisheries ministers of pronouncing a death sentence on North Sea cod, after they swept aside advice to suspend all fishing and instead imposed only limited cuts. (Source: *Ind.* 23. 12. 05)

* And the trend for deep-sea trawling is putting rare fish species on the ocean's critical list. The proportion of the North Sea floor trawled at least once a year is 90%. (Source: *Ind.* 5. 1. 06)

* However, fishermen in New England are celebrating an increase of a third in their fish stocks over the past decade, achieved using conservation methods the EU has rejected. (Still, since they only want to kill and eat the poor creatures I can't really see why they bothered. I doubt this was done for purely altruistic reasons! Ed.)

* In any case, some of Europe's most spectacular deep-sea fish species are being wiped out by over fishing, according to reports from conservation organisations. (When are we simply going to leave them all alone? Ed.) (Source: *Sunday times*, 18. 12. 05)

* Here is a rather nice fishy story: Sooty, the goldfish is thought to have been plucked from a pond by a heron that then carried it to a roof. Sooty fell down the chimney and landed on some potato peelings that had just been put on the fire. He bounced off and landed on the hearth. Bill Brooks, who had been eating his dinner when the visitor appeared, cleaned the little fish carefully and it is now safely in a pet shop where Bill keeps an eye on him. (Source: *Daily Tel.* 31. 12. 05)

* And for your interest, scientists have discovered that the bluefin tuna can cross the Pacific three times in 20 months. A tagged tuna swam 25,000 miles. (Source: *Daily Tel.* 15. 12. 05)



NEWS

* Pippa, who is our tireless SN worker in Sydney, has had a baby boy, Jack. He is, of course, adorable, and we wish every joy and happiness to her, Dad Ben and baby.

* We have great news from the EU. Their report on the findings of the Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Welfare of the European Food Safety Authority states that decapod crustaceans (e.g. lobsters and crabs) and cephalopods (e.g. octopuses, squid etc.) are able to experience pain and distress and accordingly should receive legislative protection. If this is the case, then they should receive protection under any circumstances. Several of our MPs are now tabling amendments to the present Bill which had its second reading on 10th Jan and with any luck we may get these creatures included in the Bill, under the term 'animals'. We

have all been e-mailing the relevant MPs and ministers like mad, so fingers crossed...

* But sad news that our very dear friend and supporter of animals, Irene Brignall, died last year, a few months ago. She will be sadly missed, both for her courage and support and also for her great faith. Irene had been suffering quietly for years and yet always found time to care for both people and animals and was a great support to us. God bless you, Irene.

OTHER CREATURES

During a traditional bowhead whale hunt, an Eskimo whale hunter hurls a harpoon with a black-powder grenade attached to it. The grenade penetrates near the whale's blow hole and explodes, killing the animal. The Alaska Eskimo whaling Commission began researching new weaponry after an international whaling agency two decades ago ordered that more humane methods be developed for killing bowheads... (Source: *Animal-net*, 11. 11. 05. *I agree – disgusting in both ways. Ed.*)

*Harriet, the turtle, was picked up on the Galapagos by Darwin and brought to England. She has spent the past 160 years in Australia. She was born when slavery was still legal in Britain, and was an adult by the time of the American Civil War. She celebrated her 175th birthday in November 05. Harriet now lives in a spacious enclosure in a zoo run by Steve Irwin, presenter of the *Crocodile Hunter* television series. He says, 'She stand up really tall so you can scratch under her shell and puts her head out for something to eat'. Harriet is the world's oldest animal. (Source: *Ind.* 12. 11. 05)

* It seems that, in spite of all denials, whales and dolphins are still being threatened by high intensity naval sonar because the animals depend on sound to survive. The study, by the United Nations Environment Programme lends the first official support to claims by environmental groups that military manoeuvres are responsible for the increasing incidence of mass whale beachings. 'We know about other threats such as over-fishing, hunting and pollution [but] a new and

emerging threat to cetaceans is that of increased underwater sonars,' said Mark Simmonds, of the Whale and Dolphin Society. These low-frequency sounds travel vast distances, hundreds if not thousands of kilometres from the source. (Source: *Ind.* 25. 11. 05)

*A humpback whale freed by divers from a tangle of crab trap lines near the Farallon Islands nudged its rescuers and flapped around in what marine experts said was a rare and remarkable encounter. 'It felt to me like it was thanking us...' said James Moskito, one of the rescue divers. (Source, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 16. 12. 05. Thanks to Monica for this story.

* By the way, sea monkeys, the tiny brine shrimp seeds, are now being sold in The Natural World stores. Please complain politely if you see them anywhere.



WINDSWEPT (2005)

Tsunamis, hurricanes and torrent
Tear the other lands
Roar and crash with the many live
Upon foreign habitat and strands.

The year 'tis said for tornado
And warnings dire but real
But years have passed
And with the swell other lives do seal.

This with the speeding wind and water
Fast charging the non-aquatic
With seething walls of warning stress
Slapping and dancing inexorably erratic

The territories of mammals, reptiles or fish
And visited by the sad sicken'd birds

Heaving high and running fast from Arctic
devastation

To tropical havens in another death too much
for words.

John Amsden