

THE SHELLFISH NETWORK  
NEWSLETTER, WINTER 2006/7



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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!**

Not much joy for our little friends, I'm afraid, but great joy from all of you who sent such lovely cards, greetings and donations. Very many thanks to you all, and may this year bring you all peace and happiness. Perhaps there will be a breakthrough in kindness and compassion from governments and those involved with the animal 'trade' and perhaps pigs might fly, though I shouldn't give scientists ideas! Much love to you all, and thanks to everyone who sent me info. Julie

I am still awaiting a reply to a request for a meeting with Ben Bradshaw whom I met at an MP award ceremony for their work for animal welfare. I sent him a further 3,000 signatures on our petition, but nothing yet! It was, incidentally, Bill Wiggin who I supported, as he is a great speaker for shellfish and tried very

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hard to get them included on the new Animal Welfare Bill. We are still hoping they will be included in Regulations. Fingers crossed!

OCTOPUS AND SQUID

\*A pacific octopus has learnt how to open two of the three sections of an 'octobox' made of Perspex. This is in order to get at food inside the third section, which involves a lock and separate key. *Source: The Times, 5. 9. 06* (Why Paul Martin, an aquaculture student at Cornwall College, wants the creature to go through all this when it can be easily fed seems odd. Why do humans think that solving silly problems is a sign of intelligence, and who cares anyway? Not the octopus, I'm sure! Ed.)

\*Japanese scientists showed pictures of a live giant squid, some 24ft long. She was eventually caught using a smaller squid as bait but she died during the struggle. *Source: Daily Telegraph, 23. 12., 06* (What is wrong with these people? She was so beautiful and not doing them any harm. Once again, typical human behaviour: 'I want, I want'. Ed.)

\* Same story, in *The Times, 23. 12. 06*, says that the squid has eyes that can grow to the size of a human head and tentacles far longer than a London bus. The 'scientists' have been tracking squid for three years and are keen to analyse the contents of their stomachs. (Jolly good – food, I should imagine! Ed.)



LOBSTERS/CRABS AND SAVED!

\*On August 17<sup>th</sup> British Columbia SPCA cancelled a planned crab feast which was to be held by the Prince Rupert SPCA, advertising 'Live crab, cooked to eat at the park or cooked to take home'. A photo of a real crab affirmed that real animals were to be boiled alive. So PR SPCA don't consider crabs to be animals? Strange! *Source: Animal People, Sept. 2006*

\*And Kenneth Ross from Burchhead thought a strange-looking lobster caught by a friend deserved a better fate than ending up in a cooking pot, so he gave it to the Macduff

Aquarium. Freya, who is pale blue and white, is now happy in her new home. *Source: Aberdeen Press & Journal, 7. 9. 06*

\* Penny, one of our members, saved sixty mussels from a fishmongers and took them home. She called various people to ask how to look after them, and we finally agreed that they need to be returned to their rightful home, which she said she would be happy to do. I can't tell you what a joy it is when someone phones me up to ask what to do with the various little creatures that they have taken the trouble to save. We wish Penny and all her mussels a long and happy life. Julie



A letter in *the Daily Mail 26 Dec.06* says:

'The other day, I walked past the fishmonger's three times in an hour'. Colin Campbell added that there were four live lobsters sitting on a bed of ice. The one on the end would not stay still and had been trying to get away for two days. Colin paid £18 for him and took him in his plastic bag to the pier at South Shields, undid his nipper restrains and let him wander around, enjoying his freedom. 'Then I popped him back in the sea to join his mates...the good feeling I had for the next 24 hours was worth the £18 I paid for the plucky crustacean.' (Thanks, Rona for sending me that!)

\*Now for the nasty bits! In an article by – yes, you've guessed it – Tom Parker Bowles, that kind-hearted lover of all marine beasties, has written yet again in the *Mail on Sunday, 5. 11. 06*, and given the article the title 'Smash and Crab' Ho, ho, ho, what jolly japes! Anyway, he goes on to say 'When choosing [your crab] look for as much claw waving and aggression as possible – you want the little ----- spoiling for a fight.' He does at least say freeze them for at least two hours before driving a sharp skewer through their nerve cord, (as in our guidelines, although there is no 'humane' way of killing anything) but then says 'it can be a messy business, but crack open a crab for a meal of sublime depth.' (Now, listening to Bach's St Matthew Passion or a Beethoven quartet is what I would call 'sublime depth'. Or even eating

beans on toast with lots of brown sauce! NOT eating something that has just died! Ed.)

\*And then there is James Delingpole in *The Sunday Times 29. 10. 06*, who makes a little joke about dressing a crab: 'First you must knit eight slim booties then a pair of claw-shaped mittens'. He goes on to explain the ghoulish method of extracting the 'meat' which includes cracking the claws and legs with a rolling pin. (Excuse me a moment...~~~~~Ed.)



\* Now, it may seem strange to some of us, but the *Sea Fisheries Conservation Division Sept. 2006* is listing ideas on possible measures to address the concerns about brown crab stocks. They have produced a discussion paper which sets out the current state of scientific knowledge and opinion about these crab stocks. It would seem that stocks are stable at the moment, but in the Channel they now appear to be declining. Lots of ideas and advice were received by Colin Penny, from DEFRA. Well, now, here is a bit of scientific advice from the Shellfish Network – STOP CATCHING THEM!

\*A particularly nasty ad was seen in the *Telegraph Stella Magazine 5. 11. 06* called 'Lobstereater' and it adds 'you get all kinds of EATERS at BEEFEATER'. The picture is disgusting!

#### COCKLES, MUSSELS ETC

\*There was an interesting article in *The Daily Telegraph Weekend 30. 9. 06* which described the last boat of the Whitstable oyster fleet. She is called Favourite and has had an interesting life. In 1944 she was gunned by enemy aircraft and pulled on to the beach to stop her sinking. Then a local author bought her and kept her in his garden. She was left to rot when the cottage was sold, but has been restored in recent months. Yawls, or oyster smacks, were not well built, they were often built from the offcuts of schooners and seldom lasted more than 30 years. Bill Coleman, an oyster dredger, said 'Years ago, everybody ate oysters. They called it 'rock beef' here, because they ate them when they couldn't afford to buy meat. I won't touch them raw – but I always have a feed on Christmas Eve, boiled and fried up with a bit of bacon.' (Glad that's the last boat! Ed.)

\*However, native mussels are staging a comeback after scientists intervened to safeguard

their future, according to the *Independent*, 9. 10. 06. River pollution, dredging and poaching are thought to have had a catastrophic effect on the breeding habits of the freshwater molluscs. But an Environment Agency programme took 70 pearl mussels from Welsh rivers and now have 70,000 at the Mawddach hatchery in Wales. It is hoped that many thousands will be put back into Welsh rivers by the end of the decade.

\*And Scottish Natural Heritage is planning to re-introduce mussels into places where they are most likely to survive. The Cairngorms were once home to the world's largest population, but due in the main to excessive fishing, numbers have declined. Fishing for pearl mussels is now illegal. *Source: Daily Tel. Weekend. 16. 12. 06*

\*Scottish Shellfish Marketing Group has withdrawn a batch of its own nets of live mussels due to the presence of paralytic shellfish poison (PSP). PSP is a marine biotoxin which can cause illness in humans who eat oysters, cockles, clams mussels and scallops. This is a severe toxin and has even caused some fatalities. The batch was supplied to Asda, Morrisons and Tesco who have all withdrawn them from sale. (Thanks to Bernie for that. Ed.)

\*And now – in a *Tesco Publicity Brochure for October 06-*

'Decadent yet wonderfully simple, Tesco oysters are a true delicacy' (Especially when you have the added bonus of PSP! Ed.)

\*But those of you who read last Autumn's newsletter will remember the fuss about the 'killer' oysters of Arcachon. It now seems they are innocent, after a two-month inquiry into the deaths of two people has confirmed what the shellfish producers proclaimed all along: the oysters were not to blame. However, deep mystery still surrounds the origins of an unidentified toxin which has entered the oysters of the bay on several occasions in the past two years. *Source: Independent 14. 11. 06* (Oh, well, back to the old baked beans I say! Ed.)



A male equivalent of the menstrual cycle has been seen in the saltwater shrimp *Litopenaeus vannamei*. Israeli scientists have discovered that the shrimp renew their sperm in preparation for reproductions as females do with eggs. *Source: Ind. 7. 12. 06*

\*And although the blue whale produces the loudest noise of any individual animal in the sea or on land, the loudest natural noise of all is made by shrimps. The sound of the 'shrimp layer' is the only natural noise that can 'white out' a submarine's sonar, deafening operators through their headphones. The noise of the collected shrimps amounts to 246 decibels. This equates to about 160 decibels in air, louder than a jet taking off (140 dB) and above the human pain threshold. The noise is caused by trillions of shrimps snapping their single oversized claw all at once. Video shot at 40,000 frames per second shows that the noise occurs 700 microseconds after the claw has snapped shut. The noise comes from burst bubbles, not the shutting of the claw itself – an effect known as cavitation.. *Source: Daily Tel. Weekend, 2. 12. 06*

\*Scientists have discovered species of shrimp, mussel and clam living at temperatures near boiling point 1.8 miles down in the equatorial Atlantic. The scientists from the Census of Marine Life, measured temperatures of 765F (407C) in the fluids emerging from the hottest volcanic vent. Nearby there were shrimp and mussels and clams living exposed to pulses of water at temperatures of up to 176F (80C) in a dark environment where the surrounding water is nearly freezing. There have been many exciting discoveries by this and other surveys, one of the most exciting being a 50million-year-old shrimp, believed only to be found as a fossil, living on an underwater peak in the Coral Sea. *Source: Daily Tel, 11. 12. 06* (It is a delightful creature, looking a bit like a crab and with large eyes.Ed)



\*The Environment Agency reports that the common tortoiseshell limpet, the acorn barnacle and the toothed topshell, the largest seashore shell, have all moved northwards to cooler temperatures in the past few years. *Source: Daily Tel. 20. 12. 06*

#### ENVIRONMENT

In the *Ind. 28. 12. 06*, President Bush has embraced the dangers of global warming. He is quoted as saying 'this is the beginning of a sea change in the way the US tackles global warming'. (Well I never! Ed. especially with the following):

from *BioGems Defender* Frances Beinecke, who reports that they have just won a major courtroom victory for the Western Arctic Reserve. A federal judge blocked the Bush administration from proceeding with oil and gas development in the Teshekpuk lake region and its world-class wildlife nurseries. 4. 10. 06

\*However, according to the *Ind.*, same day, sea ice in the Arctic in September melted to its second lowest monthly minimum in the 29 year record of satellite measurements. 'At this rate, the Arctic Ocean will have no ice in September by the year 2060,' said Julianne Stroe, one of the National Snow and Ice Data Centre (NSIDC) research scientists. [This could lead to the demise of the polar bear. *Ind* 12. 12. 06]



The River Jordan, once a fast and raging river, is now polluted to a trickle. Pilgrims are forbidden to plunge into the water, not because of being swept away, but because of the raw sewage and fish-farm waste, and the Jordan, in the American spiritual 'One more river to cross', is fast becoming an environmental disaster. The results of the World Water Monitoring Day show that untreated sewage and salt water from springs diverted from the Sea of Galilee are being dumped into the river. Flora and fauna inherent in freshwater rivers are nowhere to be found. *Source: Ind, 19. 10. 06*

\*Research has shown that measures to conserve fish stocks may be making things worse by creating vulnerable populations. Policies such as taking only the biggest fish are altering the age structure of fish populations, which makes them more vulnerable to total collapse under environmental stress. And as fishing continues, the population becomes more vulnerable to change. *Source: Ind 19. 10. 06*

\*British divers are helping to develop a fresh way of transplanting coral grown in floating nurseries to restore reefs off the coast of Thailand, damaged by the tsunami in 2004. The technique requires tiny fragments of coral to be grown in netted cages suspended in the sea. They have also created an artificial reef and may use specially designed concrete cylinders for coral larvae to grow. Naline Thongtham, the Thai marine biologist explained 'Natural recovery of degraded coral reefs is only possible if coral seeds or coral larvae are still available in

the area and environmental factors are right for the coral to regrow.' *Sunday Times 15. 10. 06*



\*After langoustines are caught from Scottish water, Young's Seafood sends them on a 12,000 mile round trip to Thailand to have their shells removed. They will then be sent back to Scotland and sold as scampi. Friends of the Earth Scotland said the move was 'madness' and would add to global warming. *Source: The Daily Tel. 16.11.06*



\*A comprehensive study published in the journal Science, says that all wild seafood will have disappeared from the world's menus within 50 years, if current trends in overfishing continue. (Well, they will just have to think of something else to eat then, won't they? I love the way they speak of these complex and sensitive creatures as 'seafood'. And wild, at that! What about wild lettuces, wild beetroot and wild beans? The mind boggles. Ed.)

\*Hooray! The world Organisation for animal Health (OIE) is currently in the process of establishing ethical guidelines for aquatic animals. (You can see the full details on <http://www.oie.int/eng/Norway2/home.htm>) and the industry will have to face fish pain & welfare issues. Thanks to *John Robins for that info.Ed.*)

\*Viva!'s mermaid, Christine Hagan –the Lady from Atlantis-swam ashore in many holiday towns with a message for them 'Save Our Seas, go veggie'. She said that our oceans are on the point of collapse and told bemused sun trippers to get their 'Hands off my cockles'! Her message included the fact that fish feel pain and that fish isn't a health food but is loaded with toxins such as PCBs, dioxin, arsenic and mercury. *Source; Viva! Life mag. Autumn/Winter 2006*

\*Greenpeace Ocean Defenders left what Jacques Cousteau called 'The World's Aquarium' in December. The Gulf of California is, however, sadly threatened by pollution, overfishing and uncontrolled coastal development. After diving near Espirity Santo, where they sent a message to the Mexican government: 'Marine Reserves now!', despite some playful sea lions trying to eat their banners, the decree was finally signed and the area will now be protected. They also

protested at the Los Cabos Project construction site, with its 2 golf courses, 3 large hotels, 1168 houses, three beach clubs, two theme parks and a marina for 500 boats. This will all cause irreparable damage to the environment and Greenpeace are calling on the government to control this kind of coastal development.

*Source: Greenpeace – Defending Our Oceans 12. 12. 06*

\*Global warming has begun to change the way microscopic plant life in the oceans absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and this could lead to a dramatic increase in the heating power of the greenhouse effect. Data over the past 10 years have shown for the first time that the growth of marine phytoplankton—the basis of the entire ocean food chain—is being adversely affected by rising sea temperatures. As the seas become warmer, they are less able to support the phytoplankton that have been an important influence on moderating climate change. This could lead to a feedback cycle, where increases in carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere lead to warmer oceans, and warmer oceans lead to increasing carbon dioxide concentrations. In tropical seas, the water forms layers, with warm water sitting on top of cooler water. When seawater becomes layered in this way, nutrients are prevented from rising to the surface where the phytoplankton live. Global warming is having the effect of extending the range of nutrient-poor regions of the ocean to include areas that were richer in phytoplankton ‘blooms’ on which all other marine life depends.

*Source: Ind. 7. 12. 06*



### VARIOUS

\*The European Union broke its own laws requiring that non-animal testing methods be used whenever available, when it required that live mice be injected with shellfish tissue. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) Europe, lobbied until the European Commission declared that non-animal methods are to be used for most shellfish toxicity testing. *Source: PETA Animal Times, Winter 2006*

\*Sadly, rockhopper penguins the stars of ‘Happy Feet’ are in trouble. According to the Falkland Island environmental group, Falklands

Conservation, populations of the rockhopper *Eudyptes chrysocome* have taken a massive tumble, possibly because of climate change. There has been an almost 30% decline in five years. *Source: Ind. 23. 12. 06*



\*More on seahorses. They have long been thought to be the most faithful creatures on earth, dancing together in romantic displays of affection which they do twice-daily as ‘synchronised swimming’. The male is the only known animal who gets pregnant and gives birth to live young. However, true to human arrogance, the Weymouth Sea Life centre in Dorset is asking members of the public to watch out for any adulterous behaviour in these charming creatures. Sarah Leaney, the centre’s display supervisor, said that individual seahorses are being harmlessly tagged with little necklaces so that it is easier to tell them apart—and see who is courting whom. (And who is going to watch the centre’s scientists as they mate possibly in glass boxes – the seahorses? Perhaps one day the animals will take their revenge but, I imagine, all that will be heard is laughter rolling throughout the planet at the silliness of the humans. Ed.) *Source Ind. 26. 8.06*

\*A crocodile farm has just opened on a farm in Cambridgeshire. Andy Johnson, from Church Farm, Oldhurst, wants to breed these crocodiles and sell their offspring for meat. But Viva! is shocked that the farm has been given the go-ahead by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Viva! says, ‘it seems that these magnificent creatures are the latest addition to the never-ending list of animals driven from the wild into factory farms.’ (thanks to *Linda for that, 6. 10. 06*

\*However, in Phoenix, border patrol officers found a four-foot long alligator during a routine traffic stop in south-west Arizona. The poor creature was in a suitcase. Marijuana was also found. (Presumably the gator took the stache along ‘just in case’ Aaagh! Sorry, Ed) *Source, Ind.12.12.. 06*

\*A gorgeous mimic octopus was one of the winning images in the Shell Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition. It is the most beautiful creature, with very long, slim and

delicate 'legs', and is very rare. *Source: Ind 19. 10. 06*

### ZOOS/AQUARIA

\*The Biota project, the size of five football pitches, will form part of a £1.5 billion scheme to redevelop part of the London docklands and a huge 'living reef' is to be installed at the £85 million aquarium. Marine specialists from London Zoo are 'growing' the reef which is expected to fill a sloping wall 9ft high by 24ft long. Placed in a tank with tropical fish, the wall will be one of five exhibits in which visitors will be immersed as they pass through the aquarium. The project is being supervised by a team from the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), which is a conservation charity that owns and operates London Zoo and Whipsnade animal park. The venture is run by Farrell and will house four contrasting ecosystems: the Amazon, the British Isles, the Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific. It has been designed to house invertebrates, fish, reptiles, amphibians, mammals and 'free-flying' birds in 70 exhibits that combine day-lit glass-roofed 'biomes' and large aquatic tanks. Caymans, turtles and large arapaima fish will be among the species, with toucans in the trees. Ralph Armond, director-general of ZSL, said that the project would attract an estimated 1m visitors to the London borough of Newham, one of the poorest areas in Britain. (Well, I should have thought that £1.5 billion could have gone a long way to building affordable housing, hospitals, schools etc. in such an area, without folks having to walk through simulated rainforests! Ed.) *Source: The Sunday Times 8. 10. 06*

\*The National Institute for Research into Aquatic Habitats (NIRAH) in Beds. is in the news again. There has been a row over the £375m aquarium plan, supported by £3m of public money. Anticipated costs have spiralled from £250m to £375m and the tourism element has come to dominate over scientific research, prompting critics to question the whole project. (I question it on ethical and welfare grounds, but who cares about them when such vast sums are involved? Ed.) *Source: East Anglia Animal Rights Coalition (EARC) 7, 10, 06*, but on 10 October, EARC says that the County is ready to offer £200,000 to get the freshwater aquarium plan moving again. Nirah wants to recreate endangered freshwater habitats in a spectacular centre at the Quest clayspit, combining scientific

research with animal conservation and visitor education. (I always shudder when I hear the dreaded words 'scientific research' and conservation in the same sentence. If we all stopped polluting everything we wouldn't need these animal prisons but then what would the scientists do? Ed) Many thanks to *Linda and EARC*.

*The Bedford times and citizen, 13. 10. 06* states that the Council 'is satisfied where money has gone' and looks set to advance a further "200,000 for the project. Apparently Nirah is to be 'a freshwater paradise'!



\*A beluga whale born in a Spanish marine park in Valencia and only 25 days old, has died. The baby is the first to be born in captivity in Europe and is thought to have died because Ulka, the mother, was unable to nurse her infant and stopped producing milk. The baby probably never adapted to artificial milk. *Source: Ind 19. 11. 06*

\*But there is better news at Chester zoo. Two captive female Komodo dragons have had virgin births by a process called parthenogenesis, when an unfertilised egg develops into a normal embryo without being fertilised by a sperm. It seems this is the first time this has ever been reported in Komodo dragons, although other lizard species are known to be able to self-fertilise. The caption in *The Ind. 21. 12., 06* reads 'Behold, the virgin birth (and yes, it's a son). (The mothers are very beautiful, but what they are doing in a zoo, goodness only knows. Ed.)

### FISH

\*Once more the question of fishing has come up in *The Daily Tel. Weekend 4. 11. 06*. For Britain's fishermen, who prefer to catch carp, pike, tench, roach, barbel and other species less genteel than salmon and trout, it has been an article of faith for years that the fish is carefully unhooked and returned to the water with the utmost tenderness (sic). Tom Fort, writer of this article, says that when he told fishermen in Budapest about this, the fishermen laughed and thought it Anglo-Saxon eccentricity. But now, with the influx of fishermen from all over Europe, sadly the reason to catch fish is to kill and eat them. Otherwise, what is the point? (Beats me, any of it! Ed) Many strange stories have circulated such as supermarket trolleys

fitted with car batteries used to electrocute coarse fish and gangs of poachers laying lines with multiple hooks, sweeping the waters with nets, and even, it is rumoured, making off with swans. Tom Fort finishes his piece with an 'ethical' dilemma. 'Is it actually 'better' to put a living creature through the experience – possibly painful, certainly unpleasant – of being caught and returned alive so that it can be caught again, than to kill it and eat it?' He adds that he kills very few fish (aah), and returns 95%. But he would like to have the choice and would prefer that others had it as well. (The fish, perhaps? Ed.)

\*A ban on drift-net fishing for salmon off the Irish coast has been welcomed as a great legal victory by British anglers and conservation groups. The Irish drift nets, the largest indiscriminate net fishery for salmon in Europe, have long been criticised for taking the fish returning from their feeding grounds in the Atlantic to European rivers. It comes after stocks of salmon returning to Irish rivers plummeted to between a half and a third of the levels seen in the 1970s and 80s. The ban comes into force in 2007. *Source: Daily Tel. 2. 11. 06*

\*Most governments want a moratorium on the destructive practice of high seas bottom trawling. However, Spain has the largest bottom trawling fleet in Europe and is stalling. High seas bottom trawlers tear up an area of seabed more than 30 times the size of Spain each year. Spain has a fleet of 55 vessels. *Source: Greenpeace 7. 11. 06*

\*A lovely letter in the *Ind. 29. 10. 06* sums up fish feelings, and I'm sure the writer won't mind my quoting from it:

'As a neurosurgeon, and former neuroscientist, I am well aware of the inter-species similarities between nociceptors (pain receptors) in vertebrates. To say that these aquatic vertebrates exist in a bizarre anaesthetic state oblivious to noxious stimuli suggests that fishermen close their eyes as they reel their struggling catch to the shore.' (Name supplied, Ed)

\*Fish called gouramis who pucker their lips and kiss in a smoochy way, are a popular St Valentine's Day gift in China. *Source: Daily Tel. 17. 10. 06*



\*A horrific picture in *The Ind. 12. 10. 06*, shows row after row of bluefin tuna being prepared for

the growing fashion for sashimi. Despite an agreed bluefin quota of 6,000 tons, Japan has apparently been catching up to 20,000 tons for the past 20 years. 'The fishery is out of control,' says Dr Sergei Tudela, the head of fisheries for WWF. 'Bluefin stocks are on the brink of collapse.' The paper lists what not to eat: bluefin, southern bluefin, Bigeye, Yellowfin and Skipjack, which is not yet threatened. ( We could add a much longer list but space forbids. Ed.)  
\*According to an article by Jon Kirk, *Sunday Times, 1. 10. 06*, there has been a 45% decline in wild salmon in the past 20 years. They have been ravaged by fish farm infections. These farms are responsible for the deaths of up to 95% of young wild salmon migrating out to sea, according to a new report. Concentrations of sea lice are 30,000 times higher around fish farms in coastal waters than in deep waters. The Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation, a body representing the Scottish fish farm industry, said it was working to promote long-term sustainable salmon farming and wild salmon fisheries.



\*From *The Daily Tel, 7. 12. 06*: The Royal Australian Navy has been given permission to shoot at pirate fishing boats plundering the country's rich tropical waters. Warships and customs patrol boats operating off Australia's north coast have captured a record 357 illegal fishing boats this year, most of them Indonesian vessels hunting sharks for their fins. It seems that the scale of poaching has increased as Indonesian waters suffer from overfishing.

\*Scientists have studied the fossilised skulls of the prehistoric fish *Dunkleosteus terrelli*, which grew to 33 feet long and weighed four tons. *D. terrelli* lived 400 million years ago in the Devonian era and was able to generate suction to pull prey into its mouth and to crunch its victim with a biting force rivalling that of *Tyrannosaurus rex* and large alligators. '*D. terrelli* was able to devour anything in its environment', said Philip Anderson, a graduate student from the Dept. of Geophysical Sciences at the Univ. of Chicago. The bladed jaws, capable of ripping apart prey larger than its own mouth, were a feature that sharks did not develop for another 100 million years and marked one of the most powerful bites in vertebrate history. *Source: Daily Tel, 29. 11. 06*

\*While performing at a function, musician Bill Barnes was shocked to see that each table display featured a live goldfish in a wineglass. He was told that at the end of the function they would be 'disposed of'. So he urged the guests to adopt the fish and he adopted five of them himself. They are now in a lovely environment and are much happier. *Source: PETA's Animal Times, Winter, 2006*

\*Ross Finnie is the Scottish Environment Minister. Wonderful. Except that he is also the Scottish Minister for Fisheries and has been achieving what he considers 'the best possible deal for the Scottish fleet'. He has increased quotas for monkfish, Rockall haddock and west coast nephrops (Dublin prawns) and herring catches. Thanks to *John Robins, Animal Concern Scotland and Save Our Seals Fund. 23. 12. 06*



\*Marine experts have reported an increase in the number of stingrays off the British Isles as climate change warms the Atlantic water. *Source: Sunday Times, 10. 9. 06*

\*The North Atlantic fisheries college, NAFC, Marine Centre in Shetland has denied claims that its shellfish stock assessments were unscientific and could not be relied upon. Protesters say the Shetland regulating order discriminates against full-time shellfish men, and makes its decisions behind closed doors, forcing some boat owners out of business. However, NAFC said 'the methods used to carry out stock assessments are the same as those carried out for shellfish species throughout the world. *Source: P & J, 12. 9. 06.*

\*the Asian topmouth gudgeon, a small member of the carp family, first escaped into the River Danube in the 1960s. Its progress across Europe and arrival in UK waterways has been causing alarm among fisheries experts. It is only 4cm (1 1/2 in) long and the fry are the size of a pinhead. It is capable of spawning four times a year instead of the once of most native fish, and out-competes native species for food. It also eats their eggs. (So now we have the Chinese mitten crab, the American crayfish and the Asian topmouth gudgeon, all introduced by humans, and all being hunted by humans because they don't 'fit in' Typical! Ed.) *Source: Daily Telegraph Weekend, 23. 9., 06.*



\*FishWorks, an operator of seafood restaurants, said full-year profit won't meet analyst estimates because the company expanded too quickly. It crashed 12 to 361/2 p a profits warning. It said 'the substantial management focus on its accelerated acquisition programme and its creation and subsequent exit from Harvey Nichols has detracted from the successful execution of the FishWorks model in some of the newer sites'. (Well, there's executive-speak for you! Shame, and it was doing so well, too! Ed.) *Source, Telegraph Business 23. 11. 06*

\*But here's something to cheer you up. Male subordinate grey seals are reaping the benefits of climate change by having more sex, scientists from Durham University have revealed. Less rain and rising temperatures are forcing the females on the island of North Rona to travel further to find fresh drinking water, so they are further from the watchful dominant males. (So it's not all gloom and doom, then! Ed.) *Source: Ind. 15. 12. 06*

#### POEM

In the thund'ring roar  
And peaceful silences yet  
Where birds soar  
And dive in the waters rippl'd or set  
Where the mighty crustacean  
Fly, dive and live on  
From West to Asia  
Living forms of the sea gone.

Lonely and absent the bright corals  
Still harbour the ocean's habitations  
Flower'd and beauty in peril  
Our own also in self-seeking in other  
Nations.  
More now has gone in the most fertile  
Lands

Than can return far away  
For a dangerous today and  
Most do not see, cannot say  
Nor a prayer can they pray.

John Amsden

