

THE SHELLFISH NETWORK  
NEWSLETTER, SPRING 2008

NO 47

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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.



For those of you who are receiving this newsletter after some months, we had a very serious situation beyond our control which made it impossible to contact everyone. Happily this has now been sorted and we are back to normal (!).

LOBSTERS, CRABS ETC.

A new tagging programme has been launched at Shetland's NAFC Marine Centre to find out how far brown crabs travel. Crabs used in the study will have a bright yellow tag on one of their claws displaying a unique tag number and contact information. Shellfish biologist Beth Leslie said, 'Female brown crabs are thought to undergo a migration between inshore and offshore areas as part of their reproductive cycle. The return of catch data from this tagging programme will help us to confirm if this pattern occurs around Shetland. (If you have ever seen the catching of crabs, they are hauled aboard by their thousands. Can't see the fishermen looking for tags on each one! Ed.) Source: *Aberdeen Press & Journal* 25. 1. 08

+Alien species are wreaking havoc on the world's oceans and river systems, say scientists. So says an article in *The Daily Telegraph*, 19. 2. 08 Apparently it is not a species with two legs walking upright that is causing the scientists such concern, but 'invasive and predatory marine

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animals which cause massive problems for our native creatures [and] include the American crayfish and the zebra mussel from the Caspian sea.' The study states that 84% of the world's coasts are being affected by foreign aquatic species. (Since most of them arrive by ship, carried in the bilge water or on the hull, who's fault is it anyway? Ed.) In a letter to the *Telegraph*, 16. 1. 08, 'The signal [crayfish] is now prolific in most southern rivers, where it destroys everything that cannot escape, such as fish eggs, fish fry, vegetation and invertebrates. It also burrows into the river banks, making them progressively less stable during floods. The writer goes on to say that as no fish eggs hatch and there are no vertebrates to feed on, the adult fish are growing bigger, 'presenting the prospect of coarse fish dying out in large stretches of Britain's waterways.' (Isn't that just perfect? No fish for the alien two legged species to catch for fun! And guess who introduced them? Ed.)

JELLYFISH

+According to a TV programme (no date or channel, sorry!) the Box jellyfish has 4 brains, each with 6 eyes. Their sting can kill in seconds. +An article in *The Independent* 16. 2. 08, talks of the 'spineless menace'! 'For years, Mediterranean beaches have been plagued by jellyfish. Now scientists are reporting that the problem is far worse than they had feared – and that a new generation of the poisonous creatures is poised to overwhelm the sea', writes Elizabeth Nash. Apparently, last November the Barcelona Institute of Marine Sciences launched a pioneering research programme to monitor jellyfish movements off the Costa Brava all year round. Scientists were alarmed to discover that large groups (blooms) of *Pelagia noctiluca*, the mauve stinger with poisonous tentacles, were assembling in large numbers throughout the winter months. Between last November and January, 30 separate colonies of stingers were detected in concentrations of between four and ten creatures per cubic metre of water. In January, thousands of jellyfish were detected off the coast of east Girona, north of Barcelona. Many more have been seen near Ibiza and Valencia (in the Med.) Professor Gili of the Institute says '...the government must provide the finance for a flotilla of small boats to patrol the shoreline, ready to scoop up the jellyfish as they head for land, when they are about 100m from the shore.' He adds that those already swept into shore are usually dead or dying, although their sting remains intact. (But the

'sting in the tail' whoops, sorry! Is that the scientist insists that the main cause of all these jellyfish is overfishing. The only solution is to change the fishing practices of countries that have stripped the world's seas of big fish such as swordfish and red tuna which feast on jellyfish. The other traditional predator of jellyfish – the leatherback turtle, has been driven to the point of extinction. Well, I never! Ed)



### SEA

+A letter from The Marine Environmental Information Network, Norwich, in *the Ind.* 17. 3. 08 says that with the serious level of damage to fish-spawning beds and erosion along the Norfolk and Suffolk coastline resulting from offshore dredging of sand and gravel for use as construction aggregate, it is astounding that dredging off our shoreline is still permitted. It seems that tens of thousands of tonnes have been removed, with the effect of sea rise and land sink. He goes on that the Dutch use aggregate dredged off our coast, but ban it off their own because of damage to sea life and coastal erosion. The removal of many millions of tons for over 100 years of naturally deposited sea-floor material cannot be sustained without changing the natural tidal current deposition pattern and the onshore wave pattern and without the draw-down of the protective sand and gravel from our beaches and offshore sandbanks.

+And according to *Southampton's Daily Echo* 20. 10. 07 we know more about the moon than we do about our oceans – yet the cure for some of the world's most terrible diseases could be hiding in the watery depths, says Paula Thompson. Although the seas cover 70% of the earth's surface, 95% remain unexplored and only 5% of its species have been discovered (how do we arrive at that figure, if we don't know...?) Inevitably, MPs are saying that more scientific research is needed into our seas and the science

and Technology select committee say with more funding the UK could be at the forefront of marine science—a field that could have important implications for industry, medicine and climate change. (But care must be taken that we don't plunder the seas simply for scientific interest! Ed.) However, there is some light – Dr Jon Copley of the National Oceanographic Centre in Southampton says '...the ocean is the largest environment on Earth and most of the geological processes that shape our planet take place there. Nature is very good at coming up with its own solutions to problems and there is so much of the sea unexplored, who knows what secrets it holds?' Some of the most important medical discoveries of recent years include dried processed forms of seaweed used to treat rheumatism and other inflammatory conditions while certain varieties have been found to possess antiseptic and blood thinning properties. Compounds from deep sea sponges found off the coast of Florida have led to the development of a drug to treat nonHodgkin's lymphoma while the unusual chemistry of a Caribbean sponge led to the development of the first important drug in the fight against HIV.

( The article is long and very positive – if anyone wants a copy do let me know. Ed)



+*The Surrey Wildlife Trust Magazine, Nature, Spring 08* explains that there is a huge diversity of colourful and charismatic marine life in the south-east coast. The UK's seas are home to more than 44,000 species. The saltmarshes in sheltered estuaries and harbours are the perfect home for burrowing worms, shrimps and snails. 'Just one cubic metre of mud can contain invertebrates of the same calorific value as 16 Mars Bars, but is far more nutritious. This feast attracts thousands of wildfowl and waders which visit the region to re-fuel between migrations.' The sheltered soft sediments also provide a perfect place for seagrass to flourish. Unlike seaweed, which is an alga, seagrass is a flowering plant, the only flowering plant adapted to life in the brine. Its root systems bury into the sea bed and stabilise it, helping to prevent coastal erosion. Many creatures take advantage of its long leaves for protection from predators and currents. It is a vital nursery area for

juvenile fish such as bass and mullet, a perfect place for cuttlefish to lay their eggs and a good anchor for the native seahorses. (another excellent article, too long to print here. Ed.)

+The Marine Conservation Society has an annual Beachwatch and calls for volunteers which usually takes place in September. Source: *Southampton Daily Echo* 12. 9. 07.

#### SHRIMP AND SMALL THINGS

+On reading an article by the sadly missed Miles Kington, *Ind.* 7. 3. 08, I was interested to find that he had been half listening to a BBC radio wildlife programme about a white, eyeless shrimp-like creature which likes to live in watery pockets in dark corners of British caves, and has been there since the age of the dinosaurs.

According to an expert it has survived quite unchanged. Another person in the cave said 'yes, it's probably the longest-lived creature in the British Isles. It has out survived everything else.' All it needs to survive is water and the scummy film on top. In his inimitable way, Kington added that 'It has survived for millions of years without ever doing any of those things that separate human beings from other animals, such as singing carols at Christmas, playing bingo, going outdoors and pretending that going to discos is fun, or indeed without doing anything much. The expert said that it is one of the most specialised animals he had ever come across. But its speciality is simply being an eyeless white shrimp! By comparison, added Kington, humans are very unspecialised. We do lots of things and we do most of them badly, and the things we do well are generally outside the demands of evolution.

+A tiny marine snail that grows no bigger than a lentil supports an entire community of animals in the southern oceans. But the food chain is in danger of collapse, because warmer seas are making it impossible for the snail to survive. Because the seas round the Antarctic are getting warmer and more acidic, pteropod snails, that are the ultimate food source for everything from fish to seals to penguins and whales are at greater risk of being wiped out. Due to the current rate at which the southern oceans are becoming more acidic – due to a rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide – it will be impossible from the middle of this century for the snails to make their shells. 'These creatures are the harbingers of change' Professor Hofmann told the American Association for the Advancement of Science. 'If we lose these organisms, the impact on the food chain will be catastrophic', she said



+Mobile and static-gear fishermen are heading for confrontation on the west coast of Scotland, following proposals from creel fishermen to close an area from Applecross to Loch Hourn to trawlers all year round. This area is closed to trawlers from October to April, but the Highland and Islands Fishermen's Association (HIFA) wants the closure all the year. Mr Davidson HIFA secretary said the pressure on the area meant that any conservation measures would not work. During the summer when the trawlers are in the area the creel boats suffer a lot of damage to gear. But Mr Davidson added that 'There is no point in creel boats not landing berried lobsters or having escape hatches on the creels, because the trawlers just come in and sweep them all away.' But John Hermse, secretary of the Mallaig and North-west Fishermen's Association, said: 'We have counted 51 trawlers with local connections using this sea area, not eight as HIFA has said...' Source: *P & J* 4. 2. 08

+Loch Fyne Oysters, winner of the Highlands and Islands Business Award 2007, is looking confidently to the future as it celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The company is renowned for rearing its own oysters and mussels. Source: *P & J* 6. 2. 08 (The Director of this company has been very helpful to the Shellfish Network in discussing more 'humane' ways of killing shellfish. Of course we know there is no humane way of taking life, but while people still eat the creatures we prefer that they do not suffer! [the creatures, I mean.] We believe that welfare and campaigning have to go hand in hand but we know some of you don't agree – discuss... Ed.)



#### FOOD?

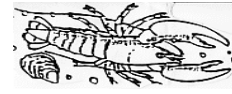
+In the *Ind. Mag.* (sorry, no date) Mark Hix once again talks about eating oysters. He says that : 'For me New Year's Eve is simply an excuse to have a really grownup (sic) party and to be a bit decadent.' He goes on to say that

'Nothing says "special occasion" like a plate of well-dressed oysters...' He goes on to discuss eating lobsters. He says of 4 live lobsters, pre-heat the oven then place the lobsters in the freezer for about an hour ('I hate doing this, but what can you do?') then with a heavy chopping knife on a chopping board insert the point of the knife through the head and cut each lobster in half.' (I take it he does not hate cutting the creatures up, simply the freezing is the bit that upsets him. Incidentally, if you are going to freeze them, it should be for at least 2 hours. Best try something else – some Redwood soya roast for instance which doesn't have to be frozen, killed or cut up, and tastes so mouthwateringly good. Ed.)

+Barbara Martin of the shellfish 'specialist' Martin's Seafresh explains the difference between cock and hen crabs. 'The male crab has more sweet white meat, the hen more of the richly flavoured brown meat.' (I would think that as far as the crabs were concerned they would know the difference and it wouldn't have much to do with the colour of the meat. Ed.) She goes on to say that she prefers to do all the killing herself as she is a little afraid what people will do with live ones. (The mind boggles. Ed.) Ms Martin has a pot big enough to take 15 crabs at a time. She explains that she kills the crab first by laying it on its back, lifting the pointed flap and inserting a screwdriver in the hole beneath. Tap it sharply so that it goes right through the shell, killing the crab swiftly and painlessly. (Dear God, if that is painless...Ed.) Source: *Times Mag.* 9. 2. 08

+Of course, there are many menus describing live shellfish and various methods of killing and cooking them. Usually the larger ones are killed simply by cooking them. Whenever I read these menus I feel sick and desperately sad, not only for the poor creatures who must suffer so terribly, but also for the humans who live with such jaded and selfish palates that their only pleasure is in killing things for food. In the *Reading Post* 20. 2. 08, Graeme Murty and Antony Worrall Thompson discuss eating crustacean, with a sick picture of Mr Murty holding a live lobster and both he and Worrall Thompson grinning at it stupidly. The caption says 'CL-AWESOME – getting to know the lobster before it meets its fate'. But in the same paper, the Opinion column gives comments from young Royals supporters 'James Harper keeps Reading alive' says one, and another 'I look up to Nicky Shorey'. What about Mr Murty? Does

he keep Reading alive, or is he only interested, apart from football, in keeping lobsters dead? Let's hope the youngsters show a little more care for those we share the planet with. Ed.



+Gordon Ramsay has angered environmentalists by encouraging diners to eat an endangered species of fish. He told Jonathan Ross that skate was a delicious alternative to cod, even though it was on the Marine Conservation Society (MCS)' do not eat' list and classed as critically endangered. Source: *Daily Tel.* 10. 11. 07

+In the same edition, Food News, Carolyn Hart talks about oysters, fish, prawns, and even a wormery from M&S!

+Also, in the *Tel Mag* 27. 10. 07 Annie Bell discusses how you can get the freshest moules and oysters at a beachside restaurant in Normandy. Methods of cooking any shellfish seem to involve killing in some painful way, and I find it very difficult to read on. I'm sure you all agree! Ed.

+A star letter in the *Reading Weekend Post* 29. 2. 08, says that chefs should kill lobsters humanely. The writer, from Tilehurst, says that hopefully there will eventually be legislation in place which would prevent the slaughter of shellfish by this method [boiling alive]. The writer goes on to suggest that everyone refrains from eating lobsters and crabs 'unless we can be certain that they have been killed by a more humane method?' (Wouldn't it be nice if, after a time without eating them, it was found that there are plenty of other delicious foods and readers no longer need to go back to eating these creatures? Hey ho, I dream again! Still, it is good to know there are many readers who have thought of the suffering and who care. Ed)



## ENVIRONMENT

+Plans to enlarge Monaco by building a new district at sea have hit opposition from environmentalists, who warn that the expansion would produce an 'undersea desert'. The construction, a bit like a giant oil rig, will put at risk protected 'meadows' of sea grass. The building will make a huge shadow and will cause the marine ecosystem to suffer. Also under threat is the sea horse, who uses the grass as a nursery, along with other species of fish. Source: *Sunday Times* 30. 3. 08

+Declining populations of wild salmon have devastated the Tay river and now new rules will force anglers to pay between £50 and £400 a day for access to the river's banks. Further measures are to be taken when the breeding period begins in June, when anglers will be prohibited from removing female salmon. Many anglers claim fish farming has harmed the ecosystem. But one angler said: 'there will always be fishermen who will take what they like. Source: *Ind. 14. 1. 08*

+The US has blocked the release of a landmark assessment of oil and gas activity in the Arctic as it prepares to sell off exploration licenses for the frozen Chukchi Sea off Alaska, one of the last remaining intact habitats of the polar bear.

Source: *Ind. 22. 1. 08*

+Eurogroup for Animals is calling for an immediate ban on animals being used for testing shellfish for human consumption, after a scientific panel ruled it was a poor way of spotting potentially lethal toxins. As a result the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is recommending the EU to use alternative, animal-friendly tests instead. Using mice and rats are the current official method to check batches of shellfish for possible poisoning, but animal-friendly testing is obligatory when available under directive 86/609/EEC, the animal experimentation directive. Thanks to *Herma for sending that in 5. 2. 08.*



(Nothing to do with it, but I think they're pretty! Ed.)

+According to the *Sunday Times*, 3. 2. 08, the sudden death of coral reefs around the world may be due to chemicals in sunscreen, a new study by the Marche Polytechnic University, Italy has revealed. Ingredients commonly used in sunscreen can awaken dormant viruses in the algae that live inside reef-building coral species.

+The world's largest protected marine reserve has been created in the Phoenix Islands. The reserve is the size of California. *Ind 15. 2. 08*

+Almost every part of the world's oceans has been tainted to some extent by the destructive footprint of human activity, writes Steve Connor, Science Editor for the *Ind. 15. 2. 08*. A map compiled by scientists integrates 17 different kinds of human activity – such as nitrogen fertilisers being washed into the sea from farming – and 20 types of ocean ecosystem, from coral reefs to mangrove forests, to study which

parts of the marine environment have suffered most. They found that more than 40% of the oceans bear the scars of serious environmental degradation and that only a small percentage have remained as pristine regions free of human influence. The worst affected waters include large areas of the North Sea, the South and East China seas, the Caribbean Sea, the Atlantic off the east coast of North America, the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Bering Sea, parts of the western Pacific and the Persian Gulf.

### FISH

The 'mud-horse' was used when coastal communities organised their own 'harvest' of the deep seas, and Adrian Sellick is sole remaining fishermen, working in Bridgwater Bay in Somerset. The mud-horse is 'half sledge and half hostess trolley'. Source: *Tel Weekend 22. 3. 08*

+Russia has moved to ban sturgeon fishing in the Caspian Sea for five years to prevent the fish being hunted to extinction by caviar traders.

Source: *Daily Tel. 28. 3. 08*

+Great Yarmouth, in Norfolk, is down to its last fishing boat. A century ago, when the fishing industry was in its heyday, 1,000 vessels sailed from the port. (Ahh! Ed.) Source: *Ind 14. 1. 08*

+Barbara Young, Chief Executive, Env. Agency, Bristol, writes in a letter to the *Ind. 16. 1. 08* that water mills can endanger fish and in particular that on the River Wye, where baby salmon coming downstream can be killed unless the right measures are in place to prevent the fish being caught in the machinery.

+The Amazon molly fish is one of a handful of creatures that are entirely female and give birth to daughters which are almost their genetic clones. It seems that a tiny amount of the a close species male's DNA, about 100<sup>th</sup> of 1% finds its way into the offspring. Source: *Tel. Weekend 19. 1. 08*

+Scientists have traced mankind's origins to our earliest ancestors. This includes fingers, from the *Acanthostega*, dating back 365 m years, eyes – genes associated with human vision are also found in jellyfish, and teeth, conodont, the fossil teeth of a prehistoric fish from about 500m year ago. Source: *Sunday Times 20. 1. 08*



+Tom de Castella, from the *Tel. Mag. 2.2.08* writes: 'Our impression of sharks as voracious man-eaters couldn't be further from the truth,

according to the filmmaker Rob Stewart, whose debut feature, *Sharkwater*, warns that unless we wake up to the dangers sharks face, they will be gone for ever.' (Good to know someone has the intelligence to care! Ed.)

+And proof! From Debbie –

'Shark-fin soup trade threatens hammerheads. The scalloped hammerhead and smooth hammerhead are on the list of endangered marine species. Other species being added to the Red List of marine animals in danger of extinction, include: the common and big-eyed thresher, the short-fin mako, the silky, the dusky, the tiger and the bull shark (This comes from the same article.)

+L'Oreal and Unilever have agreed to replace the compound squalene, found in shark livers, with other oils from plant sources. Other companies have already stopped using the oil. Source: *Daily Tel.* 31. 1. 08

#### CETACEANS ETC

+Sadly Japan is still hunting whales. They intend to kill 1000 whales, including 50 humpbacks. This is going to happen in the southern ocean whale sanctuary. We believe that most Japanese people are against this slaughter. It must be very sad for the Japan Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Let's hope International Whaling Commission (IWC) has some effect on this dreadful and unnecessary slaughter. We salute Greenpeace, Seal Alert, Sea Shepherd and others and all they do for the animals. Ed.

+100 seals have been found dead at Elandsbaal Punt on the West Coast, SA. An SPCA inspector said that a visual inspection showed nothing suspicious about the deaths. Source: *Sealalert*, SA. 6. 1. 08

+Scotland's seals and whales need protection, according to an article in *Impact*, 2.08, *the Journal of the Lab. Animal Welfare Soc. (LAWS)*. Scottish waters play host to over twenty species of whales and dolphins, as well as grey and common seals populations. As wildlife tourism in Scotland has been estimated to generate some £57 million into the Scottish economy it is surprising that there is very little in the way of protection for Scotland's marine mammals. The UK Marine Bill will designate Marine Protected Areas in UK water, but a Scottish Marine Bill is vital to ensure protection for coastal habitats up to 12 nautical miles in Scottish Waters.

+The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has proposed a plan that would allow Washington and Oregon to kill (by lethal

injection or shooting) as many as 85 California sea lions each year at the Bonneville Dam on the Columbia River, ostensibly to prevent the disappearance of wild salmon from the region. However, sealions are only responsible for eating between 2 and 4% of the adult fish, and harvest by fishermen is allowed at levels between 4-17% each year, so killing sea lions will do virtually nothing to help salmon populations to recover. Source: *In Defense of Animals* 13. 2. 08

+According to *The Sunday Times* 16. 9. 07 the northern right whale, which once ranged the Atlantic Ocean from Britain to America, is on the verge of extinction, with only 400 remaining from a population that might once have numbered hundreds of thousands. It seems that researchers have found that the creatures are dying after being hit by ships or tangled in fishing gear off America's eastern coast.

Michael Moore of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution believes that 'It all comes down to an economic conflict with lobster fishermen and shipping lines on one side and the whales on the other.'

+And this from Seal Alert -SA 5. 4. 08

A Canadian delegation to the EU appeals for mercy not to impose Seal Import bans. One Canadian sealer sobs as he thinks about the death in a boating accident of his 4 sealing buddies. Francois Hugo, Seal Alert-SA says: 'Can you imagine how we feel watching you club 600,000 baby seals to death? And Paul Watson also from Seal Alert received the following message, " *I am a well educated man from Newfoundland currently living in Atlantic Canada and I support the seal hunt, I support the seal fur trade!! There is no greater pleasure than clubbing a baby seal and feeling that skull collapsing and watching them trying to crawl away and then smacking the little shits again. It ideally should be accomplished in one blow but sometimes it takes two or even three!! Hey all the little bastards do is eat fish and defecate so we are getting rid of animals that do more to destroy ecosystems of fish than are actually contributing to more stable ecosystems. Besides seal meat tastes great and the fur is warm. Baby seal meat is exceptionally good!!*".

And we are accused of being violent! Ed.

#### +Animal Blessing Service

Craigiebuckler Church Hall, Springfield Road Aberdeen 8<sup>th</sup> June 3pm All animals with their human companions welcome.

Contact Myrna Forrester 01224 313367