

THE SHELLFISH NETWORK
NEWSLETTER, SUMMER 2008

NO 48

16 East Gardens

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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.



Dear Folks,

As from 18th August, my new address will be: Parkside House, Elmbridge Lane, Woking, Surrey GU22 9AE

No phone number as yet, but the email and web stay the same.

* Tons of thanks to all you wonderful people who have continued to send in items and cheques. It means that I can continue unabated with the work of trying to get our little friends to be recognised by law. If your item is not used this time, it will be in another newsletter or for information purposes. Nothing is wasted! Sadly, although I have written many times, I still can't get a meeting with DEFRA, even though I have submitted an article for the new Marine Bill. Fingers crossed!

The Marine Bill

Sadly, The Marine Bill runs to 700 pages and I was not able either to find it on the web or get a copy! I have, however, got the short version which explains what the Bill is about.

Jonathan Shaw, MP Minister for Marine, Landscape and Rural Affairs and Minister for the South East, explains that the proposals for the Bill 'will be a huge step forward in marine planning and protection. The Marine Bill will allow us to plan effectively for competing activities while protecting marine life and habitats.

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'By 2012, I want to see an extended network of marine protected areas conserving the richness of our marine environment....'

The paper goes on to say that 'over 8,000 species have been recorded in our seas, mainly in the shallow waters. But pressures from commercial activities have caused a decline in a number of species... It goes on to say that our seas regulate our climate, for example by conveying heat from the Tropics via the Gulf Stream... Marine ecosystems supply life support services on whose conservation our survival depends, for example plankton absorbs carbon that would otherwise contribute to global warming. The seabed can help to reduce climate change through carbon capture and storage in offshore oil wells. Seas also provide renewable energy resources, such as offshore windfarms and wave power.'

However, our current networks of marine protected areas only protect 2.2% of UK waters for marine conservation. 'We want to strengthen and improve marine conservation. By 2012 we are aiming to have an "ecologically coherent network" of well-managed marine protected areas.' This means a network of sites big enough to protect rare, threatened and valued habitats throughout our seas. So this is the main focus of the Bill although some of the 'protected areas' permit dredging for scallops and bottom-trawling by fishing fleets. Both of these practices have a catastrophic effect on the marine ecosystem (*Ind. 4. 4. 08*) I have written to Jonathan Shaw to state that since shellfish have not been included in the new Animal Welfare Act, it would be good if they could be considered in the Marine Bill. If any of you have watched 'Deadliest Catch' Ch. 4 Fridays, you will see how appallingly the wonderful king crabs are treated. There is always amongst the public (and quite rightly) concern for the cetaceans such as dolphins and their decline, but no one seems in any way bothered about how fish and shellfish are 'harvested' (to put it politely) to satisfy the jaded palates of greedy humans. And if the local people who fish these animals rely entirely on that industry, then at least some concern should be felt for the creatures and better handling should be mandatory. A Marine Bill taking this into consideration would then be worth something. Julie.

TV presenter Alan Titchmarsh is among a host of celebrities who have responded to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust's 'Operation Seahorse' who are undertaking surveys to identify the most vulnerable and valuable areas to be protected. Source: *Southampton Daily Echo* 27. 2. 08

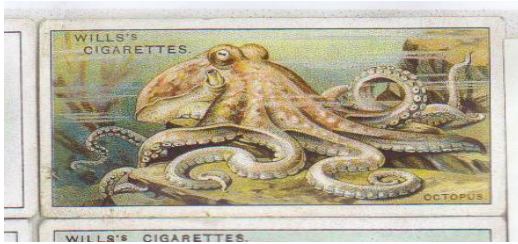
Squid and Octopus

*According to the *Independent* 28. 11. 07, a sperm whale would have a giant squid for breakfast. Squid form 80% of its diet, the rest being octopus, fish, shrimp, crab and shark.

*Philip Armstrong, in an article for, *Release, the mag. of the Captive Animals' Protection Society (CAPS) Summer 08*, describes how an octopus, stranded in a rock pool, was taken to Tynemouth Aquarium, where he has become famous for his intelligence. The octopus is called Einstein and can grab things from the keeper's hands, unscrew lids of jars and chase a football around his tank. However, Philip goes on to discuss 'intelligence' saying that society regards sheep, chickens, molluscs and other creatures as too dumb to suffer much when they are caught, confined or slaughtered. Many experts give different answers to 'what is intelligence?' (It is a little like Pilate asking 'What is truth? Ed.)

The article is very informative and he ends with 'But perhaps the narrower definition of intelligence suits us too well. Realising animals can think in so many remarkable ways might make things too difficult. How could humans endorse the current treatment of animals in laboratories, factory farms and industrial fishing, if we accepted that they're not the dumb beasts we've taken them for?' (I know we all agree with that sentiment! Ed.)

*The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa has begun experiments on the colossal squid. The rare intact specimen was caught in Antarctic waters in Feb. last year and was killed and kept frozen until April this year. The museum's director of natural environment, Carol Diebel, said, 'It's completely intact and in really fantastic condition.' (Not any more, it isn't! Ed.) The scientists plan to measure various bits of the creature, preserve it in formalin and deliver a lecture on their findings. (WE'VE FOUND A COLLOSAL SQUID! Ed.) *Source: Ind. 29. 4. 08*



Little Ones

*A species of shrimp has supersensitive eyes that can see not only three primary colours but also recognise 11 or 12 and others invisible to human eyes off a rainbow's edge. *Source: Ind. 14. 5. 08*

*Aimed at the fishing industry and other marine interests, a new booklet detailing information on

fish and prawn stocks for 2008 covers areas such as the stock assessment process and how quotas are agreed. It outlines how the scientific body the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea provides its fish stock management advice, including definitions of the terminology used. (Catch 'em, kill 'em, eat 'em? Ed.) *Source: Aberdeen Press & Journal 13. 3. 08.*

*The mass deaths of cockles off the Gower Peninsula in south Wales is threatening the future of the industry. Experts are investigating why thousands of tonnes of cockles have died in the Burry Inlet, near Llanelli. It seems that super-spawning cockles are growing so fast that many are left too weak to survive and die in large numbers, infecting the healthy cockles which have survived. 'This is definitely a threat to the industry and we will have to change our policies', said Mark Swistun, who owns a cockle-picking firm... 'At the moment we don't know what to do.' (Well, Mr Swistun, I have the perfect solution! Ed.) Scientists believe water pollution may be the cause. *Source: Ind. 14. 6. 08*

*The Scallop Association is the latest to join the Scottish Fishermen's Federation (SFF), expanding the membership to 9 organisations. Secretary John Hermse said that joining would provide a more co-ordinated representation for the scallop industry and 'will ensure our voice is heard at the highest level. We see joining the SFF as a significant milestone in the association's development., (I bet the scallops are delighted. I wonder if their voices will be heard at the highest level too? ED) *Source: P & J no date, poss. March 08.*



*The UK's largest mussel fishery won a reprieve after a judge ruled against a plan to build a marina on one of its beds. Isle of Anglesey County Council and the Crown Estate Commissioners, who are the legal owners of the foreshore and seabed which is included in the fishery, argued that, subject to obtaining the necessary planning consents, they had the legal right to go ahead. (How can you own a seabed? Even the fish don't claim that one! Ed.) *Source: P & J. 6. 5. 08*

*According to an article in the *Ind. 28. 4. 08*, the venom of the tropical cone sea snail may hold treatments for Alzheimer's, heart failure and obesity. Professor Anan Harvey of the Strathclyde

Inst. For Drug Research said: 'about 90% of the venom's ingredients have never been examined and we could find something for other diseases.'

Lobsters and Crabs

*It states in an article by Jonathan Sibun in the *Sunday Telegraph Business* 20. 1. 08, that the super-rich are still splashing out on luxuries, despite the downturn. Can it last? It seems that Rolls-Royce's annual sales topped 1,000 for the first time last year, while the gourmet foods retailer Forman & Field saw record sales at Christmas and that sales of lobsters were up 60% year on year. Lance Forman is quoted as saying, 'Clearly consumers want genuine quality British food and are prepared to pay for it.' (No, Mr Forman, it is the lobsters who 'pay for it'. Ed.)

*In the 'I don't believe it!' section of the *Southern Daily Echo Weekend Mag.* 19. 4. 08, it states that a lobster caught off the coast of Connecticut was saved because of its colour. It was found to be bright blue and it is believed one in three million lobsters are blue due to a genetic mutation. (They are usually dark blue-black and only turn red when boiled alive. Ed.)

*A lobster 36 inches long had claws eight inches long and four inches wide. It was the largest seen by local Dorset fishermen but sadly an aquarium turned down the opportunity to adopt the creature so it was destined to be killed and cooked. Source: *Daily Tel.* 23. 5. 08



*Wells-next -the-Sea in Norfolk is to be issued with guidelines to ensure that catching the little crabs do not result in lasting damage to the crab populations. Those buying plastic buckets and crabbing lines from local shops will be handed a list of dos and don'ts which, it is hoped, will put an end to incidents of unintentional crab abuse. The initiative follows a study by zoologists from Cambridge University, which found that Wells's native population of shore crabs *Carcinus maenas*, was suffering from a much higher incidence of damaged or missing pincers on stretches of beach where crabbing took place, compared with those parts free of bait-dangling tourists. Source: *Ind.* 10. 6. 08



THE OCEANS

Half a century after being blasted by the biggest nuclear weapon ever exploded but the US, Bikini Atoll now supports a stunning array of tropical corals. In 1954 a hydrogen bomb, 1,000 times more powerful than the one that destroyed Hiroshima, was tested on the south Pacific reef. But surprisingly, the area, a mile-wide crater, has recovered and is now home to a thriving underwater ecosystem, boasting corals up to 24ft in height with trunks 10ins thick. Zoe Richards of James Cook University in Australia said, 'We saw plenty of fish, corals and action going on- some really striking individual colonies.' However, numerous surveys of Bikini have concluded that it is still not safe for human habitation. Source: *Daily Tel.* 16. 4. 08

*And a natural wonder dubbed 'Brittle Star City' has been discovered on the summit of an underwater mountain. Scientists found tens of millions of starfish-like brittle stars on the top of the Macquarie Ridge, a mountain range stretching from New Zealand to the Antarctic. Currents are thought to sweep food to the creatures. Source: *Ind.* 19. 5. 08

*Sprinkling the oceans with powdered limestone is a basis for possible remedial action to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide. Source: *Letter in New Scientist* 21. 6. 08

*George Bush has urged Congress to lift a ban on offshore oil drilling. He said, 'Every American who drives to work, purchases food or ships a product has felt the effect, and families across the country are looking to Washington for a response.' Republicans and Mr Bush have repeatedly blamed Democrats for blocking legislation that opens offshore lands and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska to drilling. Source: *Ind.* 19. 6. 08

*On January 15, George W. Bush exempted the U.S. Navy from a preliminary injunction creating a 12-nautical-mile no-sonar off Southern California, meant to protect marine mammals, but the Navy is not 'exempted from compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act', U.S. District Judge Florence-Marie Cooper ruled on 4 Feb. In Los Angeles. Three days later, U.S. Magistrate Elizabeth Laporte of San Francisco found that the Navy failed to take adequate precautions to protect marine mammals before using low-frequency sonar in submarine detection exercises. A three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals then ruled on Feb. 29 in Los Angeles that the Navy must observe Cooper's ruling. Source: *Animal People*, March 08

*Navy divers spent a fourth day hunting for a 1,100lb bomb they lost in the North Sea. Before

they could blow it up a marker buoy broke away. (Makes you feel safe, doesn't it? Do they clear the sea of creatures before they blow it up? I wouldn't bet on it! Ed) Source: *Sun*, 26. 4. 08

* DDT, banned decades ago in much of the world, still shows up in penguins in Antarctica, probably due to the pesticide's accumulation in melting glaciers, a sea bird expert has said. Source: *Guardian*, 12. 5. 08

*Marine dead zones, where fish and other sea life can suffocate from lack of oxygen, are spreading across the world's tropical oceans, a study has warned. Researchers found that the warming of sea water through climate change is reducing its ability to carry dissolved oxygen, potentially turning swathes of the world's oceans into marine graveyards. And low oxygen levels in the Black and Baltic seas mean fish are being replaced with comb-jellies and jellyfish. Source: *Sunday Times* 18. 5. 08

*And in the *Daily Tel.* 23. 5. 08, an article says the greenhouse gases are turning the oceans acidic decades earlier than predicted with potentially catastrophic consequences for marine life, scientists warn. The acid in sea water is powerful enough to dissolve the shells of sea creatures. An American team has found evidence that an acidic 'tipping point' has been reached on the continental shelf along the west coast of North America.

*Also, warmer seas are being blamed for the rapid decline of the Scottish puffin colony. It has been found that on the Isle of May, home to the largest puffin colony in the North Sea, after 40 years of steady increase, the resident population has plummeted by almost a third in the past five years. Source: *Ind.* 4. 6. 08

*According to *The New Scientist* 21. 6. 08 over – fishing and changes in climate could leave marine animals struggling on a 'junk food' diet of low-calorie prey, putting dwindling populations under even more pressure. Andrew Trites of the Univ. of British Columbia believes changes in atmospheric and ocean circulation have favoured one of the sea lions' prey, the low-fat Pollock at the expense of the higher-fat herring. Numbers of the Steller sea lions off Alaska have collapsed, meaning that the sea lions can't catch enough calories to survive. The common guillemot can only carry one fish at a time, so high-quality food is a must. And Michael Fogerty of the National Marine Fisheries Service says, 'There have been concerns on the east coast of the U.S. about the quality of prey for the bluefin tuna.' Apparently they prefer herring, but Fogerty and his colleagues have noticed that while there are more herring, the fish are lighter. This is linked to a

decrease in the weight of the tuna, which are already experiencing a dramatic collapse.

*Gov. Deval Patrick of Massachusetts, U.S. signed into law a measure that will establish the nation's first management and protection plan for a state's ocean waters. This law will provide a roadmap to enable the state to balance commercial use, personal recreation and the protection of underwater ocean habitats and wildlife.



RESCUE

*Environmental campaigners have called for new laws tightening up the way marine life is protected after disturbing images were released of sea creatures which had suffered a lingering death after becoming trapped in a discarded fishing net.

An amateur diver came upon creatures including a dogfish, spider crab, wrasse and even a cormorant trapped in the 60-metre-long net. (The new Marine Bill should help to give birds at least more protection. Fish, of course, don't count! Ed.) Source: *The Guardian* 4. 10. 07

*Maui dive leader was leading an ordinary dive when an injured manta ray came to her for help. While swimming, a beautiful, very large ray appeared beneath her. Jennifer goes on to say, 'she was much bigger than what we were used to around Molokini. There was something else odd about her. I just couldn't figure out what it was.

'She was wrapped head to tail in fishing line. I saw deep V-shaped parts of her flesh missing from her backside. She had rolled with the line and was wrapped head to tail about five or six times. I felt sick, but I had to do something... I went to the manta. I moved very slowly and talked to her the whole time, as though she were one of the horses I had grown up with. When I touched her, her whole body quivered, just as my horse would. I put both of my hands on her, then my entire body, talking to her the whole time. I knew that she could knock me off at any time with one flick of her great wing.

'When she had steadied, I took out the knife that I carry on my inflator hose and lifted one of the lines. It was tight and difficult to get my finger under, almost like a guitar string. She shook, which told me to be gentle. It was obvious that the slightest pressure was painful. As I cut through the first line, it pulled into her wounds. With one beat of her mighty wings, she dumped me and bolted away. I

was amazed when she turned and came right back, gliding under my body. I went to work. She seemed to know it would hurt, and somehow, she also knew that I could help.'

Jennifer finally freed the ray and went back in the direction of the divers. They signalled her to turn round. She continued, 'I turned and saw her slowly gliding toward me. She approached me and stopped, her wing just touching my head. I looked into her round, dark eye, and she looked deeply into mine. I felt a rush of something that so overpowered me, I have yet to find the words to describe it, except a warm and loving flow of energy from her into me...then, as silently as she came back, she lifted her wing over my head and was gone. (Thank you Jennifer for such a wonderful story, Ed.) Source: *PETA Animal Times, Summer 08*

'FOOD'

Once again you have sent me lots of cuttings on sea creatures as 'food' for humans, with relevant recipes on how to serve them. It really makes nauseating reading! For example, Bee Wilson in the *Telegraph Stella Mag. 17. 2. 08*, after decrying farmed fish and tiger prawns as being bad for the environment, goes on to say, 'so it is cheering to think about one kind of farmed seafood that is actually good for the environment. Blue-black British mussels are that rare thing-a seafood that the Marine Stewardship Council actually want us to eat more of. The fact that they are so delicious is the cherry on the cake, or, rather, the parsley on top of the moules marinières.

*And in the *Southampton Echo, 22. 2. 08*, Sarah Jones speaks of king prawns being very tender, succulent and full of flavour.

**The Telegraph Mag. 12. 1. 08* discusses scallops, these lovely little creatures that move through the water, one shell raised, or remain anchored by byssus to a solid object. 'At home, fry them with black pudding or eat smoked scallops.

Also in the same mag. there is a long discussion on oysters, called 'the superfood'!

*An unsavoury(!) article in *Stella Mag 3. 2. 08* talks about 'little wonders', from one particular restaurant. Zoe Williams explains 'we had Brittany blue lobster macedoine with red crab pastilla, aromatic dressing and apple sorbet, plus...cockles, orange, sea asparagus and honey vinaigrette.' She goes on to say 'the lobster was delicate, the crab was much more assertive...' etc. (I just wonder if she knows how those poor creatures were cooked to tickle her palate? Ed.)

*And a particularly disturbing item in the *Daily Tel. 27. 5. 08* explains that cookery programmes that

have championed crab recipes have led more people to have a go at home preparation. 'Over the past 12 months, British consumers have bought more than two million pounds of crabs and crab meat.... Sales have increased by 54% over the past year. And according to Seafish, the trade body which represents sea food in the UK, £16.7 million has been spent on crab in the year since the end of April.' Here is a jolly little taster item on preparation:

Lay the cooked crab on its back, eyes pointing away from you (I'd look away at this point too! Ed.). Twist off the legs and claws and crack the claws with a hammer or nutcrackers. Pull out the white meat into a bowl. Repeat with the legs. It goes on.....

There is plenty more in that vein, but I am beginning to feel a little queezy. I'm sure you get the picture.



POLLUTION

*Following on from the problems of sea acidity, there is a long and interesting article in the *Ind. Extra, 23. 4. 08* called 'Can Seashells Save the World?' It explains that coccolithophores are microscopic marine plants that convert carbon dioxide into chalk. It was thought that rising CO₂ and more acid oceans would curb their activity. Instead they are booming – and fighting global warming. The chemistry behind the process of shell-making, called marine calcification, relies on a complex series of chemical equations kept in a state of equilibrium – balancing acts that can be tipped in either direction. The big question for science is trying to understand how rising levels of man-made carbon dioxide in the atmosphere can affect these chemical equilibria and, ultimately, the ability of these organisms to carry on making their shells and skeletons. Marine calcification is vital for coral reefs and fundamental to the key organisms at the base of the food chain on which all other sea creatures depend. The chemical process by which these organisms convert calcium ions into shells is central to knowing how the oceans will – or will not – continue to act as a 'carbon sink' that helps to soak up man-made carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. New research has shown that calcification by phytoplankton could double by the end of this century. The coming century could see carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere rising to

600 parts per million and beyond – which is unprecedented in terms of the human timescale on this planet. So the question of how marine calcifiers will cope with this change will be critical in terms of whether the earth's oceans will continue to help us to deal with our carbon dioxide emissions. (Contact me if you want to see the whole article. Ed.)

*Resorts of the north Mediterranean coast are threatened by jellyfish called 'mauve stingers'. Marine biologists have spotted vast shoals of these *Pelagia noctiluca* in the waters between Corsica and the French mainland. These creatures are really a kind of plankton. Various reasons are given for their proliferation. Patterns of the 'plagues' have changed in recent years. A rise in sea temperatures; a shortage of natural predators such as the bluefin tuna and the turtle; and changes in the wind and current patterns which might be linked to global warming. Source: *Ind. 23. 6. 08*



CETACEANS

Anti-submarine sonar might have been responsible for the deaths of five Cuvier's beaked whales, which were discovered on beaches in the Western Isles in February. Another animal, related to the beaked whales, was also discovered. Experts consider such a multiple stranding to be highly abnormal. Beaked whales are known to be highly sensitive to the powerful sound waves used by all the world's navies to locate underwater objects such as submarines. (*Submarines? Who are we at war with who have submarines? Ah, well, there's nowt so odd as folk! Ed.*) It is thought that the whales died out in the Atlantic to the south and west of Britain and then drifted towards the Scottish coast over two or three weeks. Apparently beaked whales have been killed in anti-submarine exercises in Greece in 1996, the Bahamas in 2,000 and the Canary Islands in 2002. In 2003, an American judge banned the US Navy from testing a new sonar after a court case brought by environmentalists to protect marine life. Britain's whale and dolphin Conservation Society has submitted a Freedom of Information request to the Ministry of Defence (MoD) over the strandings of the whales, with the aim of finding out if any Royal Navy activity coincided with the possible location and timing of the whales' deaths. So far, the MoD has not responded, but it might be that other navies were involved. Source: *Ind. 7. 4. 08*

*According to *Seal Alert – South Africa, 14. 4. 08*, Canada, Greenland and Namibia accounted for approximately 60% of all seals killed in 2006. The EU's environment chief, Stavros Dimas, will propose to ban imports of all seal products resulting from culls where animals suffer. The ban would apply to all seal products including furs, skins and health products, including vitamins. Namibia's seal cull is the second largest, most cruel and is the only sealing country still slaughtering nursing baby seal pups (Convention in Trade of Endangered Species (CITES)).



*But attacks by killer whales (orcas) might be helping to drive the sudden and mysterious decline of seals around the northern coasts of Scotland, new research suggest.

British populations of harbour seals (common seals) are falling steeply, with numbers in Orkney and Shetland dropping by 40% in the five years to 2006. While the population of Britain's other native species, the bigger grey seal, is remaining buoyant (sic!), harbour seal numbers are tumbling. Other causes include viral epidemics, shootings, drownings in illegally set nets and the disappearance of sandeels, an important part of the seals' diet. Killer whales are the largest carnivores on Earth, with the males growing to more than 32ft long and attaining a weight of more than 11 tonnes. They are of the dolphin family and hunt in pods and attack anything in the ocean, including blue whales, the world's largest animal. Source: *Ind. 14. 4. 08*

*The North Atlantic right whale, one of the most endangered mammals, is in danger of extinction because the Bush administration has, so far, refused to impose measures to protect the creatures from being hit by ships near busy American ports. Source: *Ind, 17. 4. 08*

*Captain Paul Watson of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society reported that the crew of the Sea Shepherd had pitched two dozen bottles of rancid butter onto the deck of a Japanese whaling factory ship in Porpoise Bay, off Antarctica. Sea Shepherd was joined at times by Greenpeace and the Australian coast guard. Four whale-catching vessels, the factory ship and a supply ship spent most of last winter trying to elude observation, rather than killing whales. Watson believed the

whalers would return to Japan with less than half of their self-assigned quota of 935 minke whales and 50 fin whales. Source: *Animal People March 08*

*A pod of 80 whales was stranded on the Senegalese coast in May. Many died, but with the help of the people of Dakar, others swam back out to sea. Source: *Ind. 23. 5. 08*

*On May 20, Iceland announced that it would allow 40 minke whales to be killed over the next six months. This is in open defiance of the commercial whaling ban that the International Whaling Commission (IWC) implemented in 1986, and a reversal of the country's decision in 2007 to halt the practice. In June, Reuters reported that Iceland meat from the whales could not sell domestically so it either rotted or sat frozen until a buyer could be found. Iceland's highest officials are split on the matter. Foreign affairs minister warned that whaling would hurt Iceland's 'long-term interests,' while the fisheries minister claims that whale hunting is 'part of the culture.' (Well, so was witch – hunting in the UK at one time, but I thought we had got past those aspects of 'culture'! Ed.) Source: *Humane society International, 2. 6. 08*

*Animal welfare and wildlife tourism organisations are calling for the Scottish Government to end the killing of seals in Scottish water, as they suspect the illegal killing of two decapitated common seals which were found close to a salmon farm at Kyle of Lochalsh. Source: *Advocates for Animals, 20. 5. 08*

FISH

Despite the millions of pounds of public money thrown into supporting NIRAH, which is planned to be the world's largest freshwater aquarium, with animal research laboratory, to be built near Bedford, the project goes from one controversy to another. Already, of the £6 million needed, about £1million has been raised. Captive Animals Protection Society, (CAPS) wonders if any lessons have been learned from the years of criticism over public funding for NIRAH. In April it was announced that Bed. CC is going to vote in secret on giving a £400,000 overdraft to NIRAH. Source: *CAPS, newsletter. No date, sorry.*

*Short-snouted seahorses have been found breeding at three locations in the Thames. This variety of seahorse is usually found around the Canary Islands and Italy. They are an endangered species. The creatures have been found at Dagenham in east London and Tilbury and Southend in Essex. This coincided with new laws which came into force in April to give the species protected status. The seahorses *Hippocampus hippocampus* are now protected under the wildlife

and Countryside Act 1981. Source: *Debbie, London Life, the Times and others 7. 4. 08*

*An article by Tom de Castella tells us that 'Our impression of sharks as voracious man-eaters (according to the filmmaker Rob Stewart) couldn't be further from the truth. He warns that unless we wake up to the dangers sharks face, they will be gone for ever.

'Sharks evolved 450 million years ago, long before the dinosaurs, and have survived five major extinctions. They range from the 9in pygmy shark to the 49ft whale shark; most live for between 20 and 30 years (some, like the spiny dogfish, up to 100)...' Sharks are intelligent, social animals, many living in schools with more complex migration patterns than birds. Out of more than 360 species, only three have been involved in a significant number of fatal, unprovoked attacks on humans: the tiger, great white and bull sharks. 'But now, thanks to the shark fin trade and unscrupulous fishing methods, sharks are facing their greatest ever threat. The shark specialist group of the World Conservation Union claimed recently that almost every species of large shark found in European waters is heading for extinction. There are 13 species classified as critically endangered.

*The fishing port of Arbroath, home of the smokie (haddock) is nearing the end of an era. Jim Smith says 'we would go out the harbour and, four or five miles off the coast, there would be plenty of fish. We never went further than 20 or 25 miles and there were 25 trawlers doing a roaring trade out of Arbroath.' He added, 'fishing has changed so much in such a short period. Arbroath harbour is empty now. We needed to go 100 miles out to sea before we can get a catch, which is a long and dangerous way to go. (Hardly surprising, if 25 trawlers were doing 'a roaring trade' each time they went out! Ed.) source: *Ind. 3. 5. 08*

*The first attempt to farm cod organically – a business that branded itself as the ethical answer to overfishing – has folded after losing £40million. Source: *Daily Tel, 12. 4. 08*

*Marine conservation group Oceana has urged the European Commission to take 'urgent measures' to eliminate discards in fisheries. Oceana wants the EC to look at the introduction of new policies to prohibit discards – the amount of fish thrown back into the sea because it is outside quota – and reduce the level of bycatch. Discards constitute 8% of the total weight of the world's 7.3million-tonne fish catch, with more than 20% of the total wastage occurring in European waters, according to Oceana. Source: *P & J 21. 5. 08*

*The EU has banned trawling for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean from the middle of June. Source: *Ind. 14. 6. 08*

*Six more species of shark have been added to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's red list of animals at risk, bringing the total to 11 sharks and rays out of 21 species studied. Source: *Daily Tel. 23. 5. 08*

*The European eel is one of Britain's weird wonders. In the spring, in dark, slow-flowing rivers around the country, young eels, or elvers, no more than 5in long, are coming to the end of one of nature's great journeys. Spawned in the Sargasso Sea near Bermuda, they are carried on currents and arrive here as see-through 'glass eels'. Then, after months as sea fish, they develop an urge to be in fresh water and ride upriver on spring tides. Source: *Tel. Weekend. 24. 5. 08*

*A female fish that has not had full sex for at least 70,000 years has left scientists baffled. (I know how they feel! Ed.)

The Amazon Molly fish defies evolutionary rules by reproducing without the help of a male, because there are none in the species. It relies on a dalliance with other male fish to trigger its reproductive cycle, but does not appear to use any of the sperm passed by the partner. Dr Laurence Loewe, of Edinburgh University's School of Biological Sciences, said: 'What we have shown is that this fish has something special going on to help it survive.' (Think I prefer the old fashioned way! Ed.) Source: *Daily Tel, 23. 4. 08*

A KINDER SCENE

Simon Buckhaven, who has worked ceaselessly for many years to encourage the humane treatment of shellfish, has kindly sent me his most recent reports on the scientific research into pain and awareness in shellfish.

A Report commissioned by Advocates for Animals July 05 by Dr. J Taylor (I have copies if you want them, Ed.) explains that there is considerable similarity and continuity between the nervous systems of vertebrates and those of cephalopods and decapod crustaceans. The opioid systems involved in analgesia and response to stress and injury appear to function in these invertebrates in the same way as they do in vertebrates. Very recently, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was asked by the EU Commission to produce a scientific opinion concerning the 'Revision of Directive 86/609/EEC on the protection of animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes. (can be downloaded at www.efsa.eu.int)

The opinion concludes:

'The largest decapod crustaceans are complex in behaviour and appear to have some degree of awareness. They have a pain system and considerable learning ability. It is concluded that...all Cephalopods and Decapod Crustaceans fall into the same category of animals as those that are at present protected. It therefore recommends that 'All decapods should be in Category 1 and so receive protection.' Further paragraphs report that 'There can now be no doubts on a scientific basis that Crabs, Lobsters and Crayfish are sentient creatures and that the current methods of killing them can only be termed as barbaric.'

Simon has now developed an electro-stunning method called the Crustastun, part funded by the Humane Slaughter Assn., which anaesthetises the creatures in less than half a second and kills the lobster (whilst still anaesthetised) in 5 seconds and a Crab in 10 seconds. A 1.5 lb lobster will take between 2-3 minutes to die in boiling water. While it is being killed in this way it releases cortisol and other stress hormones which clearly affect the texture and flavour of the meat. Government agencies concerned with Animal Welfare in Switzerland, Germany, Austria and Norway have asked for a demonstration of the single Stunner, with a view to making electro-stunning of lobsters, crabs and crayfish compulsory. Simon has given demonstrations in Zurich and various countries and to famous restaurants which have proved highly successful. As a result, Swiss legislation incorporates electro-stunning as an accepted method of killing. As yet the Swiss gov't has not made electro-stunning compulsory, however. If anyone wants more info on this, please contact me as Simon's report is very comprehensive. Ed.

NEWS ON THE CRUSTASTUN

Whole Foods Stores are currently using the single stunner at their newest store in the US in Portland, Maine, where all their cooked lobsters are first killed humanely using the Crustastun. Whole Foods have now ordered another Unit for their main supplier in Maine. Demonstrations by Simon have been given on TV to celebrity chefs with great success. They even preferred the taste of the meat. Simon has installed a number of pre-production models in various restaurants including orders from Loch Fyne Oysters pending the manufacture of the units in Sept. 08. Great interest has been shown by the Americans. This proves that more and more people are beginning to consider the suffering of shellfish. Perhaps, one day they'll stop eating them! More in our next letter.