

THE SHELLFISH NETWORK
NEWSLETTER, SUMMER 2009

NO 52

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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.



Things are moving, but oh, so slowly. I went to a meeting of the Farm Animal Welfare Council on 8 July and we were told that a possible paper on fish farming will be written in the next year or two. But no guarantees! Then there is the new Marine and Coastal Access Bill which is still in draft form and has taken on many consultation ideas from 'stakeholders'. Again, very little about shellfish and even then really only the areas of management, although the environment figures quite largely in the whole Bill. I am attending a meeting in August where all this will be discussed, so fingers crossed. The good thing to come out of this Bill is that there are going to be (hopefully) marine conservation areas, and sea quality is a grave concern, so our creatures will gain in spite of there being so little concern for their welfare. But the RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts, the Marine Conservation Society and WWF believe the legislation will have to be strengthened to be effective. Don't hold your breath, however, as the introduction of the Bill to Parliament will depend on the availability of Parliamentary time! Julie.

+ I have bought some really lovely pictures from www.man-kind.co.uk, so here is the first one:

LOBSTERS & CRABS



Lobster. Isn't he/she gorgeous?

+ *Hurdia Victoria* was about half a metre long and was a predatory monster lobster that lived in the sea more than 500 million years ago. She has been identified from pieces of a fossil jigsaw. Source: *Aberdeen Press & Journal*, 20. 3. 09

+ Now Scotland has declared war on the American signal crayfish that is "destroying fishing stocks." Richard Lochhead, the Environment Minister, said he is '...seeking the views of experts from landowning and conservation organisations.' This is part of a consultation on reforming wildlife laws, some of which go back 200 years. Source: *Daily Telegraph* 16. 6. 09

+ At a time when stocks of many commercial fisheries species are diminishing, surveys found that there were plenty of lobsters on the seabed of the north American lobster fishery. But these scuba surveys didn't match the data from lobster fishing. So Win Watson, of the Univ. of New Hampshire, attached an underwater video camera to a standard commercial lobster trap and lowered it to the seabed. Previously it was thought that lobster traps were very effective; the lobster entering through a funnel-shaped opening, and, after eating the bait inside, would find difficulty in finding the way out. But the video showed otherwise. When a lobster trap is hauled to the surface, it usually contains only a handful of lobsters and it was thought that the video would show only a small number of lobsters approaching the trap. But when they watched their time-lapse images from the camera, Watson said 'It looked like an anthill' as lobsters could be seen scuffling all over the trap. And the videos showed lobsters of all sizes crawling in and out of the funnel-shaped entrance 'as they pleased' – 'happily wandering in and out of the traps at will'. An article in the Univ's online magazine said: '[A] mere 6% of the lobsters who entered were caught, largely because they had the bad luck to be in the trap when it was hauled up'. The trap worked more like a 24-hour roadhouse where the patrons are generally free to leave!

Pat White, of the Maine Lobstermen's

Association said, 'It's pretty discouraging to think that here we, as intelligent human beings (sic), have been trying our best to harvest this thing that has no brain to speak of and they're outsmarting us'.

Source: *Creation 31 (2) March-May 2009*



A.Greenaway took the shot of this lobster being released. From Man-kind Images.

+Now, at last, the claw grab game popular at the Royal Palm Beach, Florida, has become quite controversial. Dozens of animal rights activists were outside the Ale House in May protesting about the game inside the restaurant. The claw does not catch toys as in the usual arcade amusement, but catches live lobsters, which are not only terrified and often hurt, but if caught are then cooked for the customer. What kind of mind finds the torturing of helpless animals fun? A very sick mind! The restaurant has no plans to remove the 'game'.

Source: *News article 24. 5. 09 (thanks to 'citiweets')*.

+ You might remember that we found research on pain in crabs and discussed it in the last issue. Prof. Bob Elwood of Queen's University Belfast says '...We know from previous research that they can detect harmful stimuli and withdraw from the source of the stimuli but that could be a simple reflex without the inner 'feeling' of unpleasantness that we associate with pain...' The research they did demonstrates that it is not a simple reflex but that crabs trade-off their need for a quality shell with the need to avoid the harmful stimulus. (This research was done with hermit crabs.) Source, *Yahoo News 27. 3. 09* (and this makes it all the more horrific when we read the various articles that come to me all the time on the use of crabs as 'food'. We know that they are invariably killed horribly and the idea of their suffering is unacceptable to put it mildly. Ed. I would like to thank Prof. Elwood for all the help and support he gave us on this research.)

+ For instance, Rose Prince, *Tel. Weekend 16. 5. 09*, says 'The sweetest, purest white meat must be pulled from a number of small nooks inside the soft

main skeleton that holds the legs, an exercise which, according to [Mathew] Stevens' right-hand man Neil Hodder, must be done by hand.' (Stevens is a fishmonger in Cornwall.) Now, I am not suggesting that the crab is alive during this process – far from it – it has probably been boiled alive in order to keep the flesh white and tasty. But having put the poor creature through that horrific death, it seems to me that to treat it without any respect, but to poke about in its remains simply to satisfy someone's jaded palate shows how little thought goes into what people are really eating; intelligent, sentient creatures which have a right at least to a painless death and a dignity of treatment which we humans expect for ourselves when we die. Ed.

+In the *CSMA Club Magazine April 2009*, Sarah Banbery discusses another crab recipe, but has the grace to explain that the RSPCA has guidelines for humane methods of cooking live crab.

+*The Daily Tel –Travel 18. 4. 09* had a picture competition which was won by Matthew Hudson showing the image of a porcelain crab off Madagascar. It is nestling in sea anemones and looks for all the world like a china ornament!

ALL THE SMALL THINGS

+ A community of microbes that have lived cut off from the rest of the world for more than 1.5 million years has been discovered beneath a vast glacier in the Antarctic. The organisms have survived in total darkness on nothing but the minerals and decayed organic matter that were also trapped at the base of the glacier. Instead of breathing oxygen, they breathe iron to produce energy. Source:

Independent 17. 4. 09

+In a letter from Patsy Peril to the *Ind. 15. 6. 09*, she deplores the use of industrial deep sea trawlers in the Irish estuaries. These trawlers pull the nets, not over, but through the sea bed, digging out prawns from their burrows. 'The damage done by this so-called fishing method cannot be mended because the benthos (flora and fauna found at the bottom of sea or lake) is destroyed'. The traditional method of trawling prawns was by small, medium-powered boats, which pulled light trawl nets across the sea floor, generally at the running (slack phases) of the tide cycle, when prawns venture out from their burrows to forage. (Not much difference there, then, as far as being caught is concerned! Ed.)

+And prawn landings were not good in April as bad weather hit many ports around Scotland (Ooh, shame! Ed)

+ Inverlussa Shellfish Company is trialling a new technique for mussel cultivation, the 'continuous rope system', successfully pioneered in New

Zealand. Douglas Wilson, of Inverlussa Shellfish said: 'It doesn't mean we will be able to grow more mussels but, in theory, it should make the harvesting more efficient without the backbreaking part'. (Ah, there! Try some complementary medicine, Doug. Ed.) Source: *P & J* 12. 3. 09



The seafood industry body Seafish has unveiled the results of the application process for this year's Industry Project Fund (IPF). The fund is designed to support work that has widespread benefits for the seafood industry while raising standards and improving the efficiency within the sector. (Shame there are no benefits for the 'seafood'! Ed) Source: *P & J* 5. 5. 09

+Some of the largest oysters in the world, the size of a dinnerplate and weighing up to 6lb, can be found in Australia. The Oysterfest promises a feast of molluscs plus music, dancing crafts and wine. This 'festival' takes place in Ceduna, Sth Australia on the shores of Murat bay. Both cooked and natural (presumably raw though let's not use such emotive language! Ed) oysters will be on offer. 'And no oyster festival would be complete without an oyster-opening contest, which is free to enter'. (The oysters are certainly live at this stage. I wonder if they are allowed to take part? Ed) Source: *Daily Tel – Ultra Travel Summer 09*

+Dolphins, seahorses and corals around the coast of Britain will remain under threat unless laws to protect marine life are strengthened, warned conservationists. Source: *Daily Tel*. 14. 5. 09

+While Prince Charles gives dire warning that our oceans will be exhausted of all seafood by 2048, a legal battle is set to establish who is responsible for the special area of conservation owned by the Prince's Duchy of Cornwall estate. *Mandrake of the Daily Telegraph* 11. 6. 09, hears that a permission hearing has been granted against Natural England, which is responsible for regulating the site of special scientific interest (SSSI) where the Duchy of Cornwall Oyster Farm Ltd cultivates non-native pacific oysters. It seems that non-native pacific oysters can damage biodiversity in these waters, including killing mussels, and dredging is another potentially damaging activity,' says Kate Harrison, the lawyer representing the businessman who is pursuing the legal action.

POLLUTION

+ Global warming has 'flattened' Caribbean coral reefs over the past 40 years, say scientists. Source: *Daily Tel*. 10. 6. 09

+*The Daily Tel* 7. 7. 09 also says in an article by Louise Gray that coral reefs could die in 20 years. +And Scientists say 'Underwater catastrophe' is imminent if we don't cut emissions and acidity will kill coral reefs. Source: *Ind*. 1. 6. 09

+However, British children are being given the opportunity to name a new coral reef, which will be located off a desert island in the Indian Ocean. The venture is part of a campaign by President Mohamed Nasheed of the Maldives to draw attention to the danger posed by human activity to ocean ecosystems. Source: *Daily Tel*. 26. 5. 09

+Another problem: the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Technically known as the North Pacific Subtropical Gyre, it's an area devoid of ocean currents where floating objects tend to collect. More than 7 million tons of plastic now clog an area roughly twice the size of Texas. There is six times as much plastic in the Gyre as there is plankton, which forms the base of the ocean's food chain. And plastic never biodegrades; it only breaks into ever-smaller particles called 'nurdles,' which often resemble plankton and are mistakenly eaten by bigger sea creatures. Not only do nurdles cause malnutrition, they also tend to concentrate persistent organic pollutants like PCBs and DDT with toxic effects on marine diners. Source: *Endangered Earth on line*. 26. 6. 09

+An article in *The Sunday Times Mag*. 28. 6. 09 says that our beaches are now filthy. A tide of sewage is being pumped illegally onto our beaches, and one marine protection society reckons it will take 450 years for a plastic bottle at sea to disintegrate fully. The Marine Conservation Society (MCS) says more that 170 species of marine wildlife are known to mistake litter for food and at least 144 have been discovered in plankton samples dating back to the 1960s

+There are now 46,000 pieces of plastic per square kilometre of the world's oceans, and there seems to be nothing we can do to clean it up. Even if plastic production halted tomorrow, the planet would be dealing with the consequences for thousands of years. Sailor Charles Moore found a multitude of small plastic flecks and particles floating beneath the surface of the water in the North Pacific subtropical Gyre, to a depth of 10m. 'We found six times more plastic than plankton and this was just colossal,' he said. 'No one had any idea this was happening or what it might mean for marine ecosystems, or even where all this stuff was coming from.' He found that the world's navies and commercial shipping fleets make a significant contribution, throwing some 639,000 plastic containers overboard every day, along with their

other litter. But most of the litter comes from land, being blown into rivers and storm drains and then rides the tides and currents out to sea. Source: *Tel. Mag.* 25. 4. 09

+Another problem of course, is discarded angling lines, especially in fresh water such as lochs. According to the *NW Hunt Sabs. Assn.* 2. 6. 09, the famous Speyside ospreys at the Loch Garten sanctuary were facing disaster after both adult birds became entangled in discarded fishing tackle. Lost (ghost) lobster pots, discarded nets, fishing tackle, heavy dredging, all these are part of the pollution killing wildlife at sea and aquatic environments. All human causes!

.+ The world's oceans are experiencing a crisis, not only from climate change, pollution and overfishing, but also from the rapidly worsening threat of ocean acidification. That's what scientists think is behind mass baby-oyster deaths in the West Coast's (USA) oyster epicentre, where for four summers in a row, most oysters are failing to reproduce. Source: *Centr for Biological Diversity* 18. 6. 09



+ The Wilderness Society launched Save Our marine Life in Feb. 09 to secure the future of Australia's South West marine environment, by creating large marine sanctuaries. Dr Jill StJohn joined the Wilderness Society of Western Australia in 2008 as the Marine Co-ordinator in WA. She says 'given WA has 40% of Australia's coast, including some of the most pristine marine waters on the globe, it is of utmost importance that our unique marine wildlife are protected by a scientifically developed network of marine protected areas.' Source: *Save our Marine Life* 21. 5. 09 Thanks to *The Wilderness Society*. An important step towards securing the globally significant south west waters was taken in May when the Commonwealth Govt. revealed the potential boundaries for a network of new marine protected areas. Source: *The Wilderness Society* 22. 5. 09

+Also under threat: Darwin Harbour is one of the few remaining harbours in the world next to a city, with relatively healthy terrestrial and marine ecosystems. The Harbour contains an amazing array of different wildlife; over 3,000 marine invertebrate species; 123 coral species, over 300 fish species, 6 species of sea turtles, 20 species of marine snakes, crocodiles and dugongs. 36 of the world's 48 mangrove species fringe its water. It is also visited by 12 species of whales and dolphins.

Sadly, the Northern Territory government is currently promoting Darwin Harbour as the new frontier for industry, but the assessment processes are weak and fail to protect the Harbour's natural values from inappropriate development. It seems that all Australia's Marine & Coastal territories are under threat. Source: *The Wilderness Society* 21. 5. 09 (For more info. do contact me, Ed.)

+And in the first-ever lawsuit to address ocean acidification, the Center for Biological Diversity sued the Environmental Protection Agency (USA) over its failure to address the issue's impacts in Washington state waters. Source: *Center for Biological Diversity* 18. 6. 09

JELLYFISH

+Swarms of jellyfish are massing off Britain, filling the waters with their shapes and colours, according to *The Daily Tel.* 2. 7. 09

+And Portuguese men o' war are invading the Mediterranean for the first time in a decade. This is one of the world's most poisonous jellyfish, and whose poison is potentially lethal. Source: *Ind.* 1. 5. 09

+ A four foot jellyfish called the rootmouth jellyfish (*rhizostoma octopus*) was washed up on a Devon beach. It has tentacles which can cause a painful rash. The species generally only grows to about 12", and is nicknamed the dustbin lid or sea mushroom. It has no bones or brain and is made up of 95% water. Source: *Daily Tel.* 12. 5. 09

OUR SEAS

+There are many wonderful creatures which live just off Britain's shores. Among them are a dappled kelp forest, the firework anemone, the shore crab and the John Dory fish. All these were photographed on the *Daily Tel.* 10. 4. 09 'Marine marvels page.

+But in the 17th C we could also have seen great whales on their migration from African wintering grounds to arctic feeding areas. Now, however, due to constant whaling, which began around the 9th C we hardly ever sight a great whale. Source: *News articles* 11. 5. 09 (Thanks to *citiweets*)

+The bottom of the ocean was once thought to be an inhospitable wasteland, but it has now been discovered to be teeming with unusual creatures, says Sanjida O'Connell, *Daily Tel.* 12. 5. 09. To be found are such creatures as the bioluminescent lanternfish, deep-sea gastropods and the snailfish, with its internal organs in an orange blob.

+According to the *Ind.* 25. 5. 09, overfishing has a 1,000 year history. The collapse of the global fish stocks is the result of a long process of overexploitation that began to take off in medieval times, according to one of the most detailed studies

into the history of overfishing. Scientists conclude that the technology for overfishing began in earnest about AD1,000 and accelerated in the intervening centuries to culminate in the high-tech science of factory ships, satellite tracking and underwater sonar.



This speaks volumes! From Man-kind Images

+Now some good news to lighten the doom and gloom – the South African government has announced plans to protect a vast area of the Southern Ocean. The plan is to make the area around the Prince Edward Islands into one of the biggest Marine Protected areas in the world. This will help wildlife such as albatrosses, penguins and killer whales. The Islands are located almost 2,000km to the south of SA and form an important global biodiversity hotspot. Because of the scarcity of land masses in the Southern Ocean, sub-Antarctic islands contain vast populations of seals and seabirds, which use these islands to breed and moult, and so they are critical conservation areas. Source: *WWF-UK June 09 newsletter*

FISH

+Many of you might have seen the first major documentary film about overfishing: *The End of the Line*, which depicts the plight of species such as bluefin tuna, which is in danger of dying out. It has prompted celebrities, including Elle Macpherson, the model, and Stephen Fry, the actor, to condemn restaurants such as Nobu for continuing to serve it. The film claims that 88% of EU stocks are overfished. The Marine Conservation society has produced a pocket book guide on where to find sustainable sources of tuna. (I have written to various animal food producers, such as Mars, to find out where their tuna comes from. No reply yet, of course! If you share your home with an animal, it would help if you did the same. Pretty please? Ed.) Source: *Daily Tel. 8. 6. 09*

+ *Greenpeace* have produced an excellent leaflet called 'Thrown back dead or dying WHAT A WASTE'. It goes on to say, 'Every day, across the globe, vast numbers of endangered sea creatures are being trapped and thrown back into the sea, dead or dying...And why? Because the fishing industry's

methods, like enormous nets and bait lines, are completely unselective. Not only do they catch the target fish, but a whole range of other species, like turtles, sharks and rays...Globally, around one in four creatures caught are thrown back over the side as bycatch every year.

+But the European Commission has admitted that its Common Fisheries Policy has failed, and a new fishing management system is needed. A new paper highlighted severe problems. It goes on to say 'Almost a third – 30% - of managed fisheries were "outside safe biological limits", meaning they could not reproduce normally because the parenting population was too depleted.

Joe Borg, the European fisheries commissioner said, '...it is time to design a modern, simple and sustainable system for managing fisheries in the EU.' (Funny, I can think of a really simple answer to the problem of fishing!! Ed.) Source: *Daily Tel. 23. 4. 09*

+In the *Daily Tel – Travel 18. 4. 09* there was a delightful letter from Jill Worth. She went on a holiday to Belize and was taken out on a dugout canoe to watch the fish. Hanging from a bamboo boom and wearing a snorkel mask she said: '...a dark disc-shaped shadow slid across the sandy bottom, flicking sinewy tail. Others quickly followed. The stingrays had arrived for lunch. Like a well-ordered troupe, they took scraps from our outstretched fingers, staying just long enough to let us pat their heads'. She goes on to describe a reef shark which looked like a 'blown up beach toy cradled in my husband's arms.' Then they saw a spotted eagle ray, which has a wingspan of about five feet. She fed the ray and watched its tiny mouth on the soft underbelly. Suddenly the ray leapt away to express his gratitude with a victory roll. She added: 'Then, with one final display, he disappeared for ever'.

+ Up to five basking shark pups have been born during a mass gathering of the world's second-largest shark off the coast of Cornwall. Joan Edwards, head of marine policy for the Wildlife Trusts, said, 'The Wildlife Trusts believe some areas of the South West coast and west of Scotland are seasonally very important areas for the mating and reproduction of basking sharks'.



+ A lovely letter, but an article in the *Guardian 25. 6. 09* describes how sharks are defined. It says: 'Stripped of their fins and dumped back in the sea: a threat to the world's sharks....Among endangered sharks, the scalloped hammerhead is especially

vulnerable. In parts of the world its population has declined by 99% over the past 30 years. Also vulnerable are the Porbeagle shark, fished for their skins, liver oil and fins, the Shortfin mako for their fins and the Oceanic whitetip – thought to have attacked more humans than all other shark species combined. Conservationists say that overfishing threatens to drive a third of the world’s open-ocean shark species to extinction.

+ For some extraordinary reason, a record-breaking thornray was caught in the Bristol Channel during a survey being carried out on rays! A trawler was carrying out the survey. (How sensible! Ed.)

Source: *Ind.* 23. 6. 09

+But in a horrendous story in the *Ind.* 18. 6. 09, the Mexican authorities said they had uncovered more than a tonne of cocaine bound for the US stuffed into the carcasses of 20 frozen sharks loaded on to a cargo ship in the Gulf port of Progreso.

+Also in the *Ind. Opinion & Debate*, 5. 6. 09, Johann Hari asks: ‘Could we be the generation that runs out of fish?’ He adds that ‘The process of trawling is an oceanic weapon of mass destruction’. (An interesting article well worth reading. Ed.)

+Concluding a Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) (US) lawsuit, a federal judge ruled in favour of two little southwestern fish species, the spikedace and loach minnow, by rejecting an industry-interest request to strip existing habitat protections for the threatened fishes – and prompting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to reconsider granting *more* habitat protections instead of removing them. Source: *CBD* 8. 5. 09

+And *CBD* 4. 6. 09 submitted a protest of water-rights applications filed by the Kane County Water Conservancy that would be used to advance a nuclear power plant at Green River, Utah. The protest points out the lack of information given to the public about the use of 29,600 acre-feet of water, and how the diversion of that water would affect the flow of the Colorado and Green rivers – and the species that live in and around them, including the protected Colorado pikeminnow, boytail and razorback suckers and Maguire daisy. It’s believed that the planned power plant will use more than 1.1 million gallons of water *per minute* for cooling its reactor.

+A live shark was dumped outside the offices of an Australian country newspaper in Warnambool, Victoria. The juvenile Port Jackson shark had been left overnight, but luckily it survived and police released it back into the sea. Source: *Ind.* 24. 4. 09

+An article in *BBC Olive Mag.* 1. 09 discusses the problems of salmon farming. The article says that

the farming has been beset by the problems of high antibiotic use (to treat diseases in the marine equivalent of battery farming); effluent discharges (uneaten food and faeces contaminating the sea bed); toxic chemicals (used to treat sea lice and to keep cages free of weed and algae); and farmed salmon escaping to mate with wild salmon (which blunts the migratory instinct in offspring) and infecting them with sea lice and viruses. Dawn Purchase of the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) says ‘A lot of the key issues have been addressed. The industry had moved away considerably from antibiotics, preferring to vaccinate fish’. ((!)So that’s all right then. Ed.) ‘Environmentally, this is an improvement because then antibiotics don’t accumulate on the seabed’. (Is it me, or am I missing something? Ed.)

+A conservation watchdog has denied that it plans to ‘name and shame’ boat owners whose anchors are blamed for tearing up Britain’s largest breeding sea horse colony. A voluntary anchor-free zone will be introduced to Studland Bay in Dorset.

Source: *Daily Tel*, 19. 6. 09

+A tiny seahorse the size of a pea has been found near Derawan Island off Kalimantan in Indonesia. It is named after Satomi Onishi who collected samples of the creature, proper name; *Hippocampus satomiae*. It is one of the ‘top 10’ new species scientists named in 2007, the latest year such information is available. Also included is a white ghost slug, a tiny snake, a blue wonder, a species of damselfish and a Malaysian snail, *Opisthostoma vermiculum* whose shell twists along four different axes. Source: *Ind.* 23. 5. 09



This is not the tiny one, but a male spiny seahorse, but I think it is cute anyway!

+Scientists have named the stickleback as the genius of the fish world, because it can learn from the mistakes of others. Because the fish is less than 3 inches long, finding food is precarious as it is a prime target for predators. Dr Jeremy Kenal from Durham University said ‘These fish are obviously not at all closely related to humans, yet they have this human ability to only cope when the pay-off is better than their own. The nine-spined stickleback is common in Britain and finds the best and most food by watching other fish. (I wonder how closely related we are – I was once told we share 30% of our genes with lettuces, and we certainly evolved from gilled creatures. Just as well as how would we

keep our spectacles on without ears? Ed. Good for sticklebacks!) Source: *Daily Tel* 17. 6. 09

WHALES

+Sadly whaling is not going away. Organisations like Sea Shepherd are called eco-terrorists by some, but Paul Watson, founder says: 'they can call us terrorists but to me an eco-terrorist is one who brings terror into the environment, like a whaling fleet with explosive-tipped harpoons coming into a whale sanctuary to kill a thousand whales'. He adds 'But you also have to look at our record. We've never hurt anybody. We've never been convicted of a felony. We've never been sued. We don't destroy property unless it's been used in the commission of a crime'. Source: article in the *Tel Mag* 18. 4. 09

+And moves to make a peace deal between pro and anti-whaling nations have stalled, with no chance of agreement this year. Countries have been talking for nearly a year in an attempt to hammer out an accord by this year's International Whaling Commission (IWC) meeting. But a draft report seen by BBC News admits the process has 'fallen short'. Earlier meetings had raised the possibility that Japan might countenance annual reductions in its catch over the next five years, perhaps down to zero. However, the source said Japan had offered to cut the haul to 650 minke whales per year, only 29 fewer than were caught last season. Source: *BBC News Articles, Citiweets* 12. 5. 09

+But the annual meeting of the IWC opened with compromise talks between the pro and anti bloc delicately poised. The compromise 'package' would see Japan limit its Antarctic hunt in return for the right to catch whales quasi-commercially in its coastal waters. Iceland will face criticism from anti groups for expanding its hunt of fin whales and Greenland's renewed efforts to add humpback whales to the species already hunted by its indigenous Inuit communities is another bone of contention. Source: *BBC New Articles. Citiweets* 23. 6. 09

+However, there is no guarantee that any disputes will be settled within the next twelve months. New head of the IWC, Cristian Maquieira said 'I can't promise a final solution within a year. I hope at the very least we have the framework of an agreement at the end of that period.' Source: *Associated Press* 26. 6. 09

+Some good news at last! Decades after a ban on hunting, the world's largest animals, the blue whales, have made their way back to waters off Alaska and Canada. New research suggests that

they appear to have rediscovered an old migration route that they abandoned at the height of the slaughter. Source: *Ind.* 17. 5. 09

+Now the sad news. At least 55 whales stranded on a beach near Cape Town were put down or died after rescue teams failed to return them to the ocean. Scientists had to shoot 42 of the false killer whales and 13 others perished, possibly from internal injuries, and Kommetjie Beach a spokesperson from the National Sea Rescue Institute said. Source: *Yahoo news* 31. 5. 09

+ Conservationists have been campaigning against the killing of 250 whales in Iceland. In January, the Icelandic government announced that 100 minke and 150 endangered fin whales could be hunted each year until 2013. Since then the country has been hit by the recession and a new government has been formed. Andy Ottaway of Britain's Campaign Whale, said: 'The cruel slaughter of whales will not help Iceland out of its financial crises at all, in fact it promises to make things worse.' An online poll of more than 2,000 people found that most of the British public (82%) is opposed to Iceland's whaling. Source: *Daily Tel.* 28. 5. 09

+A female beluga whale calf measuring about 5ft long and weighing 154lb was born at the Vancouver aquarium in front of cheering crowds. She was born to 21-year-old Aurora after a 15 month pregnancy. The labour lasted for a day, with crowds cheering on the mother as the calf emerged for the final three hours. The calves are born tail first to allow them to swim immediately. Source: *Daily Tel* 9., 6. 09

+ WWF-UK is putting pressure on oil companies like BP to postpone oil and gas development around the summer feeding area of the western gray whale, in the waters off Sakhalin Island in the Russian Far East. The whale population now has only 25-35 breeding females left. Source: *WWF-UK June 09 Newsletter*

+ Now there is a dilemma because marine biologists are discussing a cull of killer whales because the predators are destroying other endangered sea mammals. There has been a huge slump in numbers of species such as sea otters, Steller's sea lions and harbour seals. They link this to the changed feeding habits of some killer whales or orcas. Hunting by humans has cut the number of the orca's usual prey, the grey whale and sperm whale, so they are turning to other creatures. (Typical, isn't it? Humans slaughter one species and then blame another for turning to different food when their own has been reduced. We are such a brilliant lot. Perhaps *we* could learn a thing or two

from the stickleback? Ed.) Source: *Sunday Times* 10. 5. 09

TURTLES

The Center for Biological Diversity(CBD)and allies filed a suit against the National Marine Fisheries Service to protect sea turtles from the Gulf of Mexico's bottom longline fishery. These fisheries capture, injure and kill sea turtles that venture too close to fishing vessels' miles-long lines of baited hooks. According to a study, vessels in the gulf caught nearly 1,000 turtles between July 06 and December 08. Source: *CBD* 24. 4. 09

+And thanks to a petition by the CBD, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission published a proposed rule to ban the commercial harvest of wild freshwater turtles in the state's public and private waters. Source: *CBD* 24. 4. 09

+One of the world's rarest sea turtles that was nursed back to health after washing up on a UK beach arrived safely home in North Carolina in the US. The Kemp's Ridley turtle was washed up in Devon in January 07. She had to be tube-fed a special vitamin-enriched fish soup to bring her back to health at the Weymouth Sea Life centre. Source: *Ind.* 25. 4. 09

CETACEANS AND SEALS

The WWF is to call for international protection for dolphins and small whale species, similar to that agreed for the great whales. The international community has no measures in place to protect the smaller species, the charity claimed. Only 17% of dolphin and porpoise species enjoy any kind of protection. Source: *Daily Tel* 24. 6. 09



Cape Fur seals (sorry, no dolphins.)

+Dolphins off the coast of Scotland are travelling hundreds of miles further than expected, according to new research. The bottlenose dolphins in the Moray Firth were tracked to locations as far afield as Cork and Galway off the coast of Ireland more than 800 miles away. According to Kevin Robinson of the cetacean Research and Rescue Unit at Earthwatch: 'These findings are believed to be highly significant to our current understanding of movement and genetic mixing between

neighbouring bottlenose communities. They will also contribute to our understanding of overall distribution of bottlenose dolphin in western European waters'.

+Advocates for Animals continues to call for better protection for seals in Scotland as the Scottish Government announces its intention to repeal the ineffective Conservation of Seals Act 1970.

Advocates welcomes the provision in the draft Marine (Scotland) Bill for a ban on the shooting of seals in Scotland. The Bill, introduced to the Scottish Parliament at the end of April, makes it an offence for anyone to kill, injure or take a live seal, except for humane purposes or under licence

.However, Advocates warns that licences must only be granted in exceptional circumstances and must contain animal welfare provisions, which are not shown in the bill as drafted. Source: *Advocates for Animals News* 30. 5. 09

+The European parliament has voted to ban imports of seal products, a step Canada and Norway have said they will challenge in the world's top trade court. 'This is what the citizens of Europe want,' said Arlene McCarthy, a Briton who chairs the parliament's internal market committee. Source: *Ind.* 6. 5. 09

+The World society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) is calling for the closure of swimming-with-dolphins attractions in order to end the suffering of captured cetaceans. 'The public should be aware that many facilities capture their dolphins directly from the wild,' said Dr Naomi Rose, co-author of the report, 'Dolphins suffer terrible trauma during capture.' Few tourists 'realise the general and persistent level of stress their experience causes the mammals,' says the Report. Source: *Sunday Times* 24. 5. 09

+Sorry, folks, not a great deal on shellfish this time. I hope we have some good news in our Autumn letter. In the meantime here is a larger version of the gorgeous lobster from Man-kind images:

