

## 2017/10: Should Japan resume commercial whaling?

### What they said...

*'Perhaps if we renamed minke whales the "kangaroos of the sea", the Australian public would support their sustainable use'*

Japan's IWC representative, Minoru Moritomo, accusing Australia of hypocrisy regarding its opposition to whaling

*'Whales are the largest animals on the planet - which means killing one is no easy task. The practice of whale hunting is therefore one of unimaginable cruelty and suffering'*

The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)

### The issue at a glance

On July 6, 2017, the Japan Parliament passed a law enshrining the practice of whaling and announcing it would upgrade its fleet of vessels in a step toward returning to commercial whaling. The new whaling act set out Japan's plan to one day resume commercial whaling.

Director of the whaling affairs office at Japan's fisheries agency, Shigeki Takaya, has stated that Japan would soon recommence the commercial practice. Mr Takaya claimed, 'Japan's fundamental policy on whaling is to conduct scientific research in order to bring about the swift resumption of commercial whaling.'

Japan's current whaling for research purposes is opposed under international conservation law. The hardened stance, sanctioning commercial whaling under Japanese domestic law, will have no impact on international prohibitions. The International Whaling Commission will continue to ban commercial whaling.

The Japanese law seeks to guarantee funding for research whaling through the Japanese national budget as well as adding additional resources for defending Japanese whalers from protest groups like Sea Shepherd. The new law will allocate 5 billion Japanese yen, or about \$58 million, every year to the whaling program.

Australia, a vocal opponent of Japanese whaling activity in the Antarctic and other southern waters, is expected to protest against the new law.

### Background

(The information below is abbreviated from a Wikipedia entry titled 'Whaling in Japan'. The full text can be found at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whaling\\_in\\_Japan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whaling_in_Japan))

#### Historical origins of Japanese whaling

Japan Whaling Association estimates Japanese whaling to have begun around the 12th century. However, Japanese whaling on an industrial scale began around the 1890s when Japan began to participate in the modern whaling industry, at that time an industry in which many countries participated. Japanese whaling activities have historically extended far outside Japanese territorial waters, even into whale sanctuaries protected by other countries.

#### Contemporary Japanese whaling

During the 20th century, Japan was heavily involved in commercial whaling. This continued until the International Whaling Commission (IWC) moratorium on commercial whaling went into effect in 1986. Japan continued to hunt whales using the scientific research provision in the agreement, and Japanese whaling is currently conducted by the Institute of Cetacean Research. This was allowed under IWC rules, although most IWC members oppose it.

#### Prohibition of Japan's supposed 'scientific' whaling

In March 2014 the U.N.'s International Court of Justice ruled that the Japanese whaling program, called "JARPA II", in the Southern Ocean, including inside the Australian Whale Sanctuary, was not in accordance with the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, and was not for scientific purposes, as it had claimed.

International Court of Justice ordered Japan to cease operations.

Despite the court order, Prime Minister Abe quickly called for the resumption of whaling operations.

In December 2015, Japan went ahead with their whaling program, renamed "NEWREP-A". On January 15, 2017, a helicopter in the Australian Whale Sanctuary photographed the Japanese whaling vessel Nishin Maru with a freshly-killed Minke whale on its deck. Crew members quickly covered the carcass after seeing the helicopter. Their objective is to hunt 3,000 Antarctic minke whales over 10 years, starting with 330 whales during the 2015-16 season.

#### Disputes with the International Court of Justice and the International Whaling Commission (IWC)

These hunts are a source of conflict between pro- and anti-whaling countries and organizations. The U.N.'s International Court of Justice, in addition to other nations, scientists, and environmental organizations consider the Japanese research program to be unnecessary and lacking scientific merit, and describe it as a thinly disguised commercial whaling operation.

Japan maintains that annual whaling is sustainable and necessary for scientific study and management of whale stocks, though the Antarctic minke whale populations have declined since the beginning of the JARPA program and those whales killed have shown increasing signs of stress. Japan also argues they should be able to continue whaling because they have killed whales in the past. A poll in 2014 found that few Japanese people today eat whale meat regularly, and tourists are often reluctant to try it on ethical grounds.

Following the temporary cessation of its activities in the Southern Ocean during 2014, Japan announced a research plan for the "New Scientific Whale Research Program in the Antarctic Ocean" in late November 2014, as a replacement of previous programs. In March 2014, the ICJ ruled that the new program's predecessor was "not for the purposes of scientific research".

The replacement "NEWREP-A" plan, scheduled to commence in December 2015, covers a larger area of the Southern Ocean around the Antarctic, and 3,996 whales will be targeted over 12 years, which is fewer than in previous seasons.

The plan was submitted to the IWC and its scientific commission, but approval is not required from either for Japan to proceed.

In early October 2015, Japan's ambassador to the UN, Motohide Yoshikawa, announced that Japan does not accept the court's jurisdiction over research, conservation, or exploitation of marine life and would proceed with NEWREP-A, without waiting for the court's approval. On 1 December 2015 Japan sent a fleet to the Antarctic Ocean with the aim of catching 330 minke whales. The fleet included the ship the Nisshin Maru and three smaller boats. The move was met with objections from the Australian and New Zealand governments.

#### **Internet information**

In a post made in July, 2017, the International Fund for Animal Welfare detailed the inevitable cruelty associated with whaling. This post can be accessed at <http://www.ifaw.org/united-states/our-work/whales/cruelty-whaling>

On June 20, 2017, Sky News published a report titled 'Australia condemns new Japanese whaling laws'

The report details the Australian government's condemnation of Japan's apparent intention to renew commercial whale and Australian scepticism of supposed 'scientific whaling'.

The full report can be accessed at

<http://www.skynews.com.au/news/politics/international/2017/06/20/australian-condemns-new-japanese-whaling-laws.html>

On June 16, 2017, ABC News published a report titled 'Japanese Parliament to consider law backing commercial whaling'

The report details a bill before the Japanese Parliament which is seen as a precursor to Japan resuming commercial whaling.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-06-16/japan-to-consider-law-backing-commercial-whaling/8623214>

On April 11, 2017, The Telegraph published a report titled 'Japan's population to shrink by a third by 2065'

The report details demographic trends in Japan which suggest a dramatic population decline within the next fifty years.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/04/11/japans-population-shrink-third-2065/>

On January 18, 2017, The Conversation published a comment and analysis by Indi Hodgson-Johnston, Antarctic Law Researcher, PhD Candidate, Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies and the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems CRC, University of Tasmania. The piece is titled 'Murky waters: why is Japan still whaling in the Southern Ocean?' and examines Japan's continued whaling in the face of international condemnation and prohibitions and the options open to Australia to attempt to halt Japan's actions.

The full text can be accessed at <https://theconversation.com/murky-waters-why-is-japan-still-whaling-in-the-southern-ocean-71402>

On April 1, 2016, The Huffington Post posted a comment by Katherine Ripley (later updated on April 2, 2017). The comment is titled 'The Hypocrisy of the World's Crusade Against Japanese Whaling' Ripley argues that the only ethically consistent position for those who oppose whaling is to oppose the consumption of all animal flesh. To do otherwise, she claims, is to practise culturally based hypocrisy, favour one animal food source for protection over another.

The full text of this article can be accessed at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/katherine-ripley/the-hypocrisy-of-the-worl\\_b\\_9592752.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/katherine-ripley/the-hypocrisy-of-the-worl_b_9592752.html)

The International Whaling Commission regularly releases data on the population numbers and general conservation status of different whale species.

This data can be accessed at <https://iwc.int/status>

On December 10, 2015, The Conversation published a comment by Justin Rose, Adjunct Associate Professor, School of Law, University of the South Pacific and Adjunct Fellow, Australian Centre for Agriculture and Law, University of New England.

The comment is titled 'A necessary harvest: it's time to allow Japan to kill whales'. Rose argues for a resumption of the commercial hunting of whales.

The full text can be read at <https://theconversation.com/a-necessary-harvest-its-time-to-allow-japan-to-kill-whales-51740>

On December 4, 2015, Wired published a comment by Sarah Zhang titled 'The Japanese Barely Eat Whale. So Why Do They Keep Whaling?'

The comment examines the reasons behind Japan's continued whale hunting.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.wired.com/2015/12/japanese-barely-eat-whale-whaling-big-deal/>

On April 1, 2015, The Japan Times published an editorial titled 'Nation's food self-sufficiency rate' which argued 'The...important question for food security should be whether a country has sufficiently diversified its sources of securing food for its people. Maintaining an open trade system and diverse sources of food imports should be the priority for Japan.'

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2015/04/01/editorials/nations-food-self-sufficiency-rate/#.WX2EE1FLdVc>

On September 25, 2014, The Diplomat published an analysis titled 'Japan: Let Them Eat Whale'. Among other claims, the article suggests that the number of whales caught by Japan might decline if the operation were run commercially rather than as a government-funded research project.

The article can be accessed at <http://thediplomat.com/2014/09/japan-let-them-eat-whale/>

On February 20, 2012, The Conversation published a comment by Stephen Wearing, Associate Professor, Management, University of Technology Sydney, titled 'Watching whales makes more economic sense than hunting them'

The comment details the economic advantages of whale-based tourism relative to whaling.

The full text can be accessed at <https://theconversation.com/watching-whales-makes-more-economic-sense-than-hunting-them-5332>

On November 10, 2011, Japan Today published a comment by Glen Clancy titled 'Japanese whaling: Why the West is in the wrong'

The piece argues that Australia's sensitivity toward whaling is culturally-based and unsustainable in

the context of Australians' meat-eating habits.

The full text can be accessed at <https://japantoday.com/category/features/opinions/japanese-whaling-why-the-west-is-in-the-wrong>

On July 2, 2000, BBC News published a report titled 'Australia accused of whaling hypocrisy' The report published a summary of the debate for and against whaling conducted in 2000 by the International Whaling Commission. It included accusations by Japanese representatives at the IWC, that country's such as Australia which itself hunts wild animals for food, were guilty of hypocrisy when criticising Japan for sustainably hunting whales.

The full text can be accessed at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/816359.stm>

In 1995, a marine animal welfare group, Breach Marine Protection UK, published a report detailing Norwegian survey data suggesting that even with supposedly more efficient killing methods the time between harpooning and whale death is unacceptable.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.whales.org.au/policies/methods.html>

### **Arguments in favour of Japan resuming commercial whaling**

1. Commercial whaling can be conducted without threatening the survival of whale species Critics of the prohibition of whale hunting claim it is not based on data, but on an absolute resolve to ban whale hunting permanently, irrespective of whale numbers.

In November, 2011, Glen Clancy noted in Japan Today, 'The IWC 1982 moratorium stipulated that: "This provision will be kept under review, based upon the best scientific advice, and by 1990 at the latest, the Commission will undertake a comprehensive assessment of the effects of this decision on whale stocks and consider modification of this provision."

The political strength of IWC anti-whaling nations has ensured that a scientific review of the moratorium has never taken place.'

Japan claims that one of the reasons it has conducted scientific whaling over many years has been to conduct research intended to ensure the sustainability of commercial whaling.

Arguing in favour of whale consumption, Australian commentator, Michael Evans, noted in July, 2013, 'Today it's estimated about seven of the 13 species of great whale, including the blue whale and the bowhead, are endangered. But some fin and Bryde's whales and minke whales are abundant...

I'm not talking about allowing hunting of endangered species. Iceland, Norway and Japan have argued they want to hunt only abundant species of whales.'

This point has also been made by Justin Rose, Adjunct Fellow, Australian Centre for Agriculture and Law, University of New England, in December, 2015.

Rose has stated, 'Certain whale species were hunted close to extinction. The International Whaling Commission was formed in 1946, but failed at initial regulatory attempts, so parties agreed to a moratorium. The species under threat were saved from over-hunting.

Now, armed with better data, is an opportunity for the international community to agree to a tightly-controlled commercial harvest of non-endangered whales, alongside a range of universally-supported conservation programs.'

It has even been claimed that allowing the resumption of commercial whaling might actually reduce the number of whales being caught by Japanese whaling fleets. Currently, Japan conducts what it refers to as scientific whaling for research purposes, with the catch being offered for sale, supposedly as an incidental consequence of this activity. Quotas are set each year. In 2013, a typical year, quotas were fixed at 935 minke, 50 fin, and 50 humpback whales in the Antarctic.

Japan's scientific whaling has been overseen by the non-profit Cetacean Research Institute since 1987. The Institute receives tens of millions of dollars annually in government subsidies - more than \$50 million in the 2013-4 fiscal year. The whale meat it offers for sale is substantially unsold, with some 5,000 tons of whale meat being stored in taxpayer-funded warehouses in 2014.

Critics of whaling have argued that consumer demand would not make the practice commercially viable on the scale of the current scientific whaling. Thus, if it were to be reintroduced on a commercial basis, so long as the subsidies were withdrawn, numbers of whales caught based on demand would fall and the enterprise would be likely to fail.

### **2. Whale meat is a valuable food source in Japan**

Supporters of extending Japan's access to whale meat note that this would constitute a valuable

supplement to Japan's food sources. In an article published in The Christian Science Monitor on March 24, 2016, it was noted, 'Japan has just over 1.7 percent of the world's population but consumes six percent of the world's fish harvest. The island nation imports more seafood than any other country.'

Kyoshi Ejima, a member of the Upper House who voted in favour of the legislation, said Japan could become a self-sustaining food nation if commercial whaling was allowed to resume.

Mr Ejima has stated, 'This resource exists out in the world. There are minke whales down in the Antarctic Ocean that are of a body weight of around 5,000 to 10,000 kilograms. These are a great source of food and my position is that we should harness this for food.'

The director of the whaling affairs office at Japan's fisheries agency, Shigeki Takaya, has stated that the country would soon recommence commercial whaling. Mr Takaya has indicated, 'Basically, we believe whether it's whales, sharks or tuna, all marine resources should be used sustainably based on scientific research.'

Though whale meat has declined in popularity in Japan, it has traditionally been a significant food source. At the turn of the 20th century, Japanese coastal whaling received a boost with the introduction of steam ships and grenade-tipped harpoon guns.

Whales helped keep Japanese citizens fed both during and after World War 2. In 1947 whale meat made up almost half of all animal protein consumed by the country. Nearly 20 years later, whales continued to make up nearly one-quarter of the Japanese diet.

Supporters of whale meat consumption as an important protein source for the Japanese population hope that dietary education, especially of children, will encourage renewed acceptance of the meat and result in a restoration of its popularity.

### 3. Those opposed to Japanese whaling display culturally-based hypocrisy

Japanese supporters of whale hunting point to the hypocrisy of those who oppose whale hunting. They argue that other marine and land-based animal species are either hunted or farmed for human consumption. They further claim that outlawing the hunting of whales displays a culturally- or ethnically-based bias.

On July 2, 2000, the Japanese IWC representative, Minoru Moritomo, accused Australia of double standards regarding whale hunting, highlighting the millions of kangaroos killed in Australia each year.

Mr Moritomo stated, 'Perhaps if we renamed minke whales the "kangaroos of the sea", the Australian public would support their sustainable use.'

Western commentators have made similar comments regarding the inconsistency of many of those who oppose Japanese whaling. In a comment originally published in The Huffington Post on April 1, 2016 and then updated on April 2, 2017, Katherine Ripley stated, 'There is essentially no difference between hunting non-endangered whales for food and hunting any other species of non-endangered animal, such as deer, for food.' Ripley concluded, 'There is a very deep hypocrisy behind our criticism of Japan's whaling programs.'

Ripley further noted, 'Just as the West looks with disgust upon eastern countries that eat dogs, we malign whaling because whales hold a special place in our hearts. All the while, we sit around our tables eating chickens, cows, and pigs-which studies have proven are actually more intelligent than dogs.'

We create arbitrary differences between animals to criticize the practices of other cultures, while continuing to justify our own, but the reality is that if you disapprove of Japanese whaling, you have to disapprove of killing all animals for food.'

### 4. Japan regards a ban on whaling as an attack on its cultural traditions and national identity

Whaling is a sensitive issue in Japan, regarded as an assault on Japanese tradition and identity.

Many Japanese politicians and much of the Japanese population are slighted by international opposition to Japanese whaling. In February, 2013 the Japanese Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Hayashi Yoshimasa, stated, 'I don't think there will be any kind of an end for whaling by Japan...we have a long historical tradition and culture of whaling...criticism of the practice is a cultural attack, a kind of prejudice against Japanese culture.'

In 2015 the Japanese Whaling Association stated, 'Asking Japan to abandon this part of its culture would compare to Australians being asked to stop eating meat pies, Americans being asked to stop eating hamburgers and the English being asked to go without fish and chips...'

Critics of the Japanese position argue that contemporary Japanese tend to exaggerate the extent of



their country's cultural connection with whaling; however, some analysts note, the issue is not the historical reality of the cultural importance of whaling, but the political and popular perception of whaling's significance.

In an article published in the *Asia-Pacific Journal* on April 15, 2016, Chris Burgess stated, 'The Japanese government's position on whaling rests on...premises which are not always consistent with the historical record...' Burgess further notes, 'Whaling has become a symbol of Japanese national identity, an explanation which might help to explain Japan's resistance to international pressure.' The same point has been made by Kazuhiko Kobayashi, an agronomy professor and the co-author of *Japan's Dietary Transition and Its Impacts*, who has stated, 'The strong condemnation of whaling by the foreigners is taken as harassing the traditional values.'

Opposition to what many Japanese regard as an international attack on the traditions of their country may help to explain popular support for whaling despite the fact that few Japanese eat whale meat. A survey conducted in 2014 found that over 60 percent of the Japanese population supports the country's whaling program, even though only 14 percent consume whale meat.

## 5. Countries other than Japan hunt whales

Some Japanese authorities have objected to international criticism of Japan's whaling activities, claiming that there are other nations that also hunt whales without attracting the opprobrium that Japan does.

Nori Shikata, the spokesman for the Japanese delegation to the International Court of Justice, has stated, 'It's not only Japan that is engaged in whaling. It's almost nearly 10 countries in the world, including the United States, Canada, Norway, Iceland, Denmark and Russia among others. Commercial whaling is conducted by Norway, which has consistently objected to the moratorium since its introduction, and Iceland, which initially conducted a scientific program following the introduction of the moratorium but has since returned to commercial whaling.'

A number of countries with indigenous populations claim the hunting and killing of whales is integral to their culture. Whaling that the IWC terms 'aboriginal subsistence whaling' is not subject to the moratorium.

The IWC allows Denmark (including Greenland), Russia, the United States and the Caribbean nation St Vincent and the Grenadines to conduct aboriginal subsistence whaling.

Greenland, for example, is permitted to hunt bowhead, minke, humpback and fin whales claiming a cultural connection. The whale products are distributed within the hunter families, and some of it is also legally sold on the local open markets. Furthermore a smaller part of the hunt is processed, according to EU veterinary standards, in two localities in Greenland, in order to cover the needs of those local communities, not having access to their own whaling vessel or those communities having a meat deficit.

There are also countries that are not members of the IWC that conduct whaling in line with cultural practices. Canadian Inuit communities hunt bow and beluga whales for food.

## Arguments against Japan resuming commercial whaling

### 1. Whale meat consumption is not popular in Japan

Small-scale whaling is traditional in some parts of Japan, but whale meat was only ever popular in the post-war period when food shortages caused it to be widely consumed. General McArthur, who headed the US occupation force, authorized two military tankers to become giant whaling ships establishing industrial whaling in Japan.

Kazuhiko Kobayashi, an agronomy professor and the co-author of *Japan's Dietary Transition and Its Impacts*, has stated, 'Whale has lost its position among the animal meats, and will belong more to the category of curious foods for the predominant majority of Japanese.'

A 2006 poll commissioned by Greenpeace and conducted by the independent Nippon Research Centre found that 95 percent of Japanese people very rarely or never eat whale meat. A 2008 Greenpeace survey found that four out of five major supermarkets and sushi chains had decided to give up selling it for lack of demand. The amount of uneaten frozen whale meat stockpiled in Japan doubled to 4,600 tons between 2002 and 2012.

Similarly, a *Times* report published on June 15, 2012, stated, 'In a series of auctions this year, the government organisation that markets the meat sold only a quarter of the 1200 tonnes of whale hunted last year, leaving 909 tonnes unsold. On top of unsold meat from previous hunts, this brings to 4700 tonnes the total amount of whale stockpiled in Japan.'

In 1962 Japan harvested 233,000 tons of whale meat for sale, while in 2013 it is projected that only

2,400 tons of whale meat was likely to be sold in the country because of low market demand according to information obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Tsunetoshi Ishida of the Institute of Cetacean Research, a pro-whaling organisation, stated, 'We've been having difficulties selling meat from research whaling for the past three or four years. I have to admit that things are difficult...'

Junko Sakuma has been researching Japan's whaling industry between 2006 and 2016. According to Junko's research, the average consumption of whale meat by Japanese people in 2015 was just 30g (one ounce) per person.

## 2. Whale meat will not increase Japanese food self-sufficiency

From the late 1940s to the mid-1960s whale meat was the single biggest source of meat in Japan. At its peak in 1964 Japan killed more than 24,000 whales in one year, most of them enormous fin whales and sperm whales.

However, contemporary Japan is not self-sufficient in food. Dietary preferences play a large role in Japan's relatively low level of food self-sufficiency.

Japan's calorie-based self-sufficiency rate (that is the percentage of the average citizen's calorie intake which comes from Japanese-grown foodstuffs), which stood at 73 percent in 1965, has steadily declined for decades as people's lifestyles and dietary habits have changed. After dipping below 50 percent in 1989 and experiencing subsequent ups and downs, the rate has largely hovered around 40 percent since 1997.

Food self-sufficiency figures have declined in line with the drop in the consumption of rice, whose domestic output nearly covers the nation's needs, and the increase in demand for meat, whose production depends heavily on feed imports and on imported meat products. Those who argue that whaling could make Japan less reliant on imported livestock feed and imported meat ignore the relative unpopularity of whale meat.

Today, Japan can afford to import meat and cattle feed from Australia, America and other nations. There is no deep-sea commercial whaling in Japan. Of the thousands of fish wholesalers in Tokyo's famous Tsukiji fish market only two still deal in whale meat.

As a reflection of the realities of the Japanese food market, the Japanese government has recently lowered its food self-sufficiency target from 50 to 45 percent.

The Japanese government currently appears to believe that the best way of guaranteeing Japan's food supplies is to import from a wide range of countries so that a supply failure from one exporting country will not leave Japan vulnerable to food shortages. In addition, it has been noted that improvements in agricultural practices may be able to reduce Japanese dependence on imported livestock feed. Further, the declining Japanese population is expected to reduce pressure on supplying sufficient food.

## 3. Whale populations remain at risk

Although whale numbers of generally increased since a prohibition was imposed on commercial whaling, whale authorities argue that whales are still under threat from a variety of sources. Whale hunting has been noted as a danger to individual animals and to whole species whose numbers are small. Broadly, environmental factors such as climate change, chemical pollution and noise pollution are a threat to all whale species and are compounded by the impact of whale hunting.

The International Whaling Commission has stated, 'Threats to cetaceans can be said to incorporate two broad categories. The first are those that result in death in the short-term such as direct hunting (e.g. whaling) and accidental/incidental mortality (e.g. bycatches in fishing gear, ship strikes). At the level of the individual animal, this is of course always a problem...'

The other category of threats is more difficult to identify and especially quantify - those that can be said to affect the 'overall fitness' of the population with respect to reproductive success and/or survivorship and that are generally related to environmental degradation. These include such factors as chemical pollution, noise pollution, overexploitation of prey, disturbance, climate change, etc. At the level of the individual animal these may not always appear to be a problem (for example a female whose reproductive ability has been impaired may seem perfectly healthy), but at the population level they may represent a serious threat. These environmental factors can affect populations of all species...'

Those who oppose a resumption of whale hunting therefore do so for a combination of reasons in terms of species survival. They are concerned immediately to protect species whose numbers are currently in decline, and they are also concerned to protect other species whose numbers currently

appear healthy, but who are subject to great pressure from environment degradation. With regard to minke whales, the primary species that Japan would be hunting commercially and the species Japan is currently hunting for what it cites as 'research purposes', a number of surveys have indicated that the species is in decline. The International Whaling Commission has stated, 'Commercial exploitation of Antarctic minke whales (the smallest of the large whales) began in the early 1970s, much later than the other large whale species. There are several hundred thousand Antarctic minke whales and thus they are clearly not endangered. However, there has been an appreciable decline in their estimated abundance between the multi-year circumpolar surveys conducted between 1982/83-1988/89 and 1991/92-2003/04. Present estimates of total Antarctic abundance range from around 460,000 - 690,000 (two methods).'

#### 4. There are no humane methods of whale hunting

Opponents of whale hunting note that the practice inevitably entails great suffering for the whales as there is no quick or humane method of killing them.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) has claimed, 'Whales are the largest animals on the planet - which means killing one is no easy task. The practice of whale hunting is therefore one of unimaginable cruelty and suffering.

This is how Dr Lillie, a ship's physician on an Antarctic whaling expedition in 1946, described what he saw: "If we can imagine a horse having two or three explosive spears stuck into its stomach and being made to pull a butcher's truck through the streets of London while it pours blood in the gutter, we shall have an idea of the present method of killing. The gunners themselves admit that if whales could scream, the industry would stop, for nobody would be able to stand it."

The IFAW has stated that whale hunting methods have not improved appreciably since this observation was made more than 70 years ago.

The IFAW has listed the methods typically employed today in order to catch and kill whales. It notes, 'Whales are often pursued to the point of exhaustion before they are harpooned. Exploding harpoons are often not fatal, and some whales are harpooned multiple times before they die. Wounded, harpooned whales are dragged to whaling vessels, where they may be speared with more harpoons or shot with high-powered rifles. Whales which are harpooned near the tail and then winched in alive to the bow of the catcher ship eventually die of suffocation as their heads are forced underwater. Because whales are able to slow their breathing and heart rate, many which appear dead or unconscious are probably still feeling extreme pain.'

Since bans were imposed on whaling in the 1980s both Norway and Japan have experimented with more efficient and hopefully humane methods of killing whales, including a new type of harpoon using a grenade head containing penthrite explosive.

Survey data from Norwegian whaling operations in 1993 reveal levels of suffering which critics of whaling condemn as little improved and still inflicting unacceptable distress on the animals. Fifty percent of whales did not die instantly. The average time to die was three and a half minutes. The longest recorded time to death was 55 minutes and six percent of whales took at least fifteen minutes to die.

Critics note that not included in this data is the stress caused the whale during the chase nor the distress of the whole group when one of its number is chased and killed in a painful and protracted way.

#### 5. Whale-based tourism is of greater economic benefit than whale hunting

Opponents of whale hunting claim that in terms of economic return, whale-based tourism returns greater economic benefits than whaling.

In an article published in *The Conversation* on February 20, 2012, Stephen Wearing, Associate Professor, Management at the University of Technology, Sydney, noted that participation in whale watching grew from 9 million tourists to Japan in 2001 to 13 million in 2008, with revenues rising from \$1 billion to \$2.1 billion per annum over that period. The Professor observed, 'Whaling, on the other hand, relies heavily on state and private subsidies.' He concluded, 'The state-supported whaling industry in Japan has made consistent losses over the past 20 years - an estimated US\$223 million since 1988 - and amassed a stockpile of whale meat estimated at 4000 tonnes in 2010.'

Opponents of whaling have further observed that successful whale watching businesses have been launched out of former whaling and fishing ports, offering an alternative economy for those communities. Thus, whale-based tourism has the potential not only to offer Japan far greater



financial returns overall, but also to supply direct economic advantages in terms of employment and boosted local income in the very communities where whaling is failing.

### Further implications

It seems inevitable that Japan will ultimately cease whaling. Many critics have considered it remarkable that the practice continues despite the international censure Japan has received and the commercial failure that attempts to sell whale meat to Japanese consumers remains.

Indeed one explanation offered for the Japanese Government's continued support for scientific and now commercial whaling is precisely that it has been condemned by much of the rest of the world. The wide-spread consumption of whale-meat in Japan was a post World War II phenomenon, fostered by the American occupation forces to supply food for a starving people. Despite these historic circumstances, many of Japan's current leaders, some of whom were children in the 1940s and 50s, look back on this period with nostalgia. The practice of eating whale meat is regarded with a sentimental attachment in Japan despite its relatively recent and forced nature as a generally consumed food source.

Japan's skewed view of its history during World War II has been widely remarked upon. History textbook controversies primarily concern attempts to downplay Japan's imperialist ambitions toward its Asian neighbours during World War II. Much of the Japanese population is unlikely to have an objective or reasonably complete view of the nature of its nation's involvement in World War II. The consumption of whale meat after the War is caught up in this apparently general misrepresentation of the country's history during this period.

Despite this artificially induced sentimentality regarding whale-meat consumption, the meat is not popular among young Japanese consumers and its consumption is in serious decline. Thus, it seems likely that the practice of hunting whales will stop. In addition to nostalgia and misrepresentation, the continued hunting of whales appears to be being fostered rather than discouraged by international criticism and prohibitions. Successive Japanese governments have condemned the position of the anti-whaling community as hypocritical and biased. Many Japanese leaders have seen attacks on whaling as an attack on Japanese culture and an unwarranted intrusion by other nations into what they see as a purely domestic matter.

It may even be the case that Japanese whaling would end more rapidly if the rest of the world were to cease condemning it so vehemently.

### Items from the news index used in the compilation of this issue outline

AUST, September 10, 2016, page 24, comment by Graham Lloyd, 'Breach for the sky'. [↗](#)

AGE, September 22, 2016, page 13, news item (photo of ship) by D Flitton, 'Sea Shepherd unveils its new Warrior'.

AGE, October 23, 2016, page 22, editorial, 'Majesty of the deep must be protected'. [↗](#)

AUST, October 31, 2016, page 12, comment by Josh Frydenberg, 'We remain at the forefront of the fight for whale conservation'. [↗](#)

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