Navy Sonar Versus Whales And Dolphins:
Unprecedented Mass Stranding in the Bahamas

By William Rossiter, CSI President

If you can read this article and not feel compelled to act, I have failed to communicate the significance of the problem, and your role in its solution. This is a plea for you to write some letters. Immediately, please.

The Stranding: On 15 March 2000 an unprecedented mass stranding of seventeen whales and dolphins began in the Bahamas, including Blainville’s beaked whales, Cuvier’s beaked whales, at least one spotted dolphin, one Minke whale and one fin or Bryde’s whale. No natural disaster has ever been known to produce such an event. Human responses were heroic but quickly overwhelmed because of the scattered nature of the strandings from Abaco to Grand Bahama to the north, and Eleuthera to the south. Sharks were also a threat. Specific details of the stranding are included in a preliminary report by Ken Balcomb and Diane Claridge of the Bahamas Marine Mammal Survey on Abaco, Bahamas, which is available from CSI on request, or on CSI’s web site at http://elfi.com/csiupdat.html. In the report they mention that the typical stranding rate of cetaceans in the Bahama Islands is one or two reported per year in the entire island chain.

Besides Balcomb and Claridge the human response included the Bahamian Fisheries Department, local residents, scientists and officials, Charles Potter of the Smithsonian Institution, and a team led by Dr. Darlene Kettten of Harvard Medical School and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

The Navy: The U.S. Navy and British Royal Navy conducted an undersea warfare acoustical test called the Littoral Warfare Advanced Development (LWAD) Sea Test, program number 00-1, which apparently began about 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. on 15 March off Abaco Island, in a zone designated as Area “A” that extended from Cape Canaveral in the north to the Bahamas in the south, approximately 100 nautical miles east of Florida. LWAD 00-1 continued into Areas “B” and “C” through 22 March, tracking the eastern seaboard approximately 50 nm off the coast of South Carolina.

The exercise was testing what the Navy calls the Directional Command Activated Sonobuoy System, and involved a Navy P-3 aircraft dropping two buoys north of Abaco, one as close as 35 miles to the island, the other 70 to 75 miles from the island. One buoy emitted a sonar signal which was manipulated and returned by the other, as a target submarine was moving between the two buoys. Future tests are apparently scheduled for sometime in late May to early June (LWAD 00-2) and late September to early Oc-

Whales Alive! is a publication of Cetacean Society International. Editor: Brent Hall. CSI is an all volunteer, non-profit, tax-exempt conservation, education, and research organization based in the USA, with volunteer representatives in over 25 countries around the world. We are dedicated to the preservation and protection of all cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) and the marine environment on a global basis. CSI is a member of WhaleNet. Headquarters address: CSI, P.O. Box 953, Georgetown, CT 06829 U.S.A. Phone/fax: 203-431-1606. E-Mail: 71322.1637@compuserve.com. Web: http://elfi.com/csihome.html
Instead of agreeing that the stranding and the LWAD 00-1 tests may be connected, which is a logical, prudent and honorable assumption, and supporting an investigation into the relationship, which is Navy policy, the Navy denies any connection because there is no unequivocal proof of pathological injury to any whales from acoustical sources the Navy used. In fact, in an obvious breakdown of Naval policy, the tests continued after the Navy became aware of the strandings, and continued into the known calving and migrating area of the extremely endangered right whale during a critical time.

Even if there was no physical damage to the whales’ ears, the whales may have died because of the characteristics of the sonar sounds they heard. Perhaps the noise caused disorientation, or simply frightened them into the shallows as suggested by Ken Balcomb. It is also plausible that the noise might have disoriented or terrified many more animals, and the strandings were just a sample of the true impact.

CSI demands that the Navy invoke the Precautionary Principle, stop denying reality because of the lack of unequivocal proof, and admit that in our collective ignorance we may be doing serious harm to marine life. CSI demands that the Navy must stop all future LWAD Sea Tests pending a thorough and public investigation into the mass stranding of cetaceans that occurred in the Bahamas on 15 and 16 March 2000.

Right now we must act to prevent the Bahamas tragedy from being covered up, ignored, and wasted.

Your Role: What are we asking you to do? You have the remarkable power to write to your Senators and Representatives in Congress, and other officials, and express your concerns with the LWAD and all Navy undersea warfare acoustical tests.

Whom to contact: First, look for the names and addresses of your Senators and Representatives in the blue pages of your phone book. They need to hear from you because a constituent’s concerns, particularly in a letter, enables them to get involved, inquire, and seek changes. Your letter to a Member of Congress is a priority and may be the key to answers and action. That is the way our system works and your role in it. We all have busy lives; if nothing else please write these letters now, while the issue is fresh in your mind.

If you can do more please write the following people:
Hon. Richard Danzig, Secretary of the Navy, United States Department of the Navy, United States Pentagon, Rm. 4E-686, Washington, DC 20350. Fax: (703) 614-3477.
Ms. Donna Wieting, Chief, Marine Mammal Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3326. Fax: (301) 713-0376.
Mr. John W. Twiss, Executive Director, U.S. Marine Mammal Commission, 4340 East-West Highway, Bethesda, MD 20814. Fax: (301) 504-0099.

LFA SRP PHASE IV: THE DIN CONTINUES

By William Rossiter, CSI President

Dr. Robert Gisiner of the United States Navy Office of Naval Research recently confirmed that the Navy intends to fund more research on the Low Frequency Active Sonar (LFA). CSI has been reporting on the LFA in almost every Whales Alive! since October 1996. A lawsuit filed in Hawaii in March argues that in 1998 the Navy succeeded in having suits challenging LFAS testing off Hawaii dismissed by representing to the courts that the Navy had completed the underlying research and did not intend to do any more testing. The Hawaii County Green Party filed a motion on Tuesday, 14 March to reopen the 1998 case. Government attorneys immediately made a motion to dismiss the case, avoiding any discussion of the allegation that the Navy has made and continues to make irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources to SURTASS LFA deployment in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act. All motions are being scheduled on June 13.

Unofficial plans for the LFA Scientific Research Program (SRP) Phase IV show a study of the reactions of sperm whales to LFA-type sounds, conducted in the Azores or Dominica about July or August. Principal investigators are Drs. Jonathan Gordon of Oxford and Peter Tyack of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. After the Bahamas strandings (see preceding article) it
is likely that the beaked whales will not be targeted, although they were originally included.

The way the results of the earlier SRP’s were used leave many interested parties divided about SRP Phase IV, to put it mildly. The Navy’s spin on the earlier SRP’s, claiming that the LFA is no worse than a bad heavy metal band, was such bad public relations that they blew away any credibility they had. The scientist’s desire for clean and clear data suffered from technological and environmental problems, a lack of funding and foresight to do enough directed surveys and follow-ups, a biased slant to the data selectively used to support the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), and some unsupported conclusions that will haunt reputations. The DEIS drew an enormous amount of expert criticism. The Navy contends that SRP IV does not need to be incorporated into a revised DEIS, while clearly admitting that it is needed to fill gaps.

Meanwhile, in part because of the inability of the previous SRP’s to answer reasonable questions and concerns, the opposition to the LFA has grown enormously. The whale watch industry in the Azores is not pleased with what they have heard. Any further testing anywhere will be objected to on the principle that the Navy’s scientists cannot be trusted to search objectively for the truth about acoustical impacts without harming marine life in the process. Tyack and Gordon are far from Navy scientists. There are no other experts in their field who care more about whales, but will their results be valued as objective science or interpreted to support a military mission? Will they answer enough questions? Can they do all this without harming marine life, and prove it?

In rebuttal to opposition to any more LFA tests there are those who ask: “How else will we know what we are doing? We all ‘know’ that human noises are harming marine life but without objective data there can be no regulation or management of excess noise.” The answer is that even with all possible data on whales left deaf in the wake of experiment after experiment any regulatory or management solutions will be delayed by military and industrial politics, always underfunded and understaffed, and never adequately enforced. In other words the public doesn’t trust the Navy to care enough, nor the National Marine Fisheries Service to protect enough. Perhaps both will, but they must prove it.

The following letter was written by U.S. Senator from Connecticut Joseph I. Lieberman, in response to a letter by CSI Director Emeritus Dr. Robbins Barstow concerning the Navy’s LFA sonar system.

March 9, 2000

Dr. Robbins Barstow
190 Stillwold Drive
Wethersfield, CT 06109

Dear Robbins:

I enjoyed having a brief opportunity to visit with you in West Hartford a few weeks ago. I am glad to hear that you appreciate the positive tone of "In Praise of Public Life." One of my hopes in writing it was that it would move people to reassess the cynicism about politics that is so prevalent in America today.

I appreciate your comments regarding the potential impact on whales and other marine mammals of the Navy’s testing of the Surveillance Towed Array Sensor System (SURTASS) using Low Frequency Active (LFA) Sonar. As you know, I have long appreciated your environmental work and especially your efforts on behalf of our marine neighbors, the whales. Consequently, I was pleased to receive your timely update on the status of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on SURTASS LFA that was released by the Chief of Naval Operations last July.

I have been aware of the Navy’s development of SURTASS for undersea surveillance. I have also been aware of a variety of concerns about the DEIS,
including charges of incomplete data on marine mammal behavior and human health effects, failure to address evidence known to the Navy, and use of test decibel levels that were not within the range of the actual planned transmissions.

As you probably know, I support the development of technology to ensure military readiness. At the same time, however, I am concerned about the potential deployment of active sonar which might adversely affect the behavior of marine mammals, particularly near refuges and protected areas for whales, seals, and other ocean creatures. The decision of whether to deploy LFA SURTASS must rest on sound scientific observations and conclusions about the effects on marine mammals and human health, as well as any benefit it provides for national defense. At the moment, we do not know enough about the effects of sound on behavior and health of marine animals.

I have asked my staff to follow new developments in the SURTASS issue, such as the case just filed by environmental organizations in Hawaii. I will also be interested in the National Marine Fisheries Service’s (NMFS) response to the Navy's application for a permit for taking of marine animals incidental to LFA sonar. I appreciate your concern about SURTASS LFA and its potential impact on whales and other marine life. I hope that you will not hesitate to contact me again as the issue evolves over the coming year.

Warm regards.

Sincerely,
Joe Lieberman

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**CITES Meeting in Kenya**

*By Kate O’Connell, CSI Board*

As *Whales Alive!* goes to press, the whale conservation community is gearing up for what promises to be one of the toughest battles in decades in the fight to save whales from commercial hunting. From April 10th through the 20th, government representatives from nearly 150 countries will be meeting in Nairobi, Kenya to address issues revolving around trade in wildlife products, during the 11th Conference of the Parties to CITES, the Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna. Among the many topics slated to be discussed are proposals by Japan and Norway to downlist (that is, to remove from complete protection) certain species and stocks of whales.

In spite of the International Whaling Commission’s (IWC’s) supposed ban on commercial whale hunting, Norway and Japan continue to hunt more than 1,000 minke whales each year. Japan’s hunt is based on scientific whaling, and focuses on minke whales in both the North Pacific and the Southern Ocean. The latter hunt is particularly egregious in that it occurs in the waters of the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary. Japan was the only IWC nation to vote against the Sanctuary during the Commission’s 1994 Annual Meeting. Norway’s hunt is a commercial one, based on that country’s objection to the moratorium.

CITES, in recognition of the IWC’s attempts to save the last remaining whale stocks from the threat of extinction, opted to support the conservation policies of the IWC by placing a total ban on international trade in whale products. Japan and Norway have repeatedly tried to attack this ban, failing in their attempts in both 1994 and 1997. However, at this upcoming meeting in Nairobi, it is clear that both whaling nations have mounted an unprecedented campaign to get minke whales and gray whales removed from their CITES Appendix 1 listing, and to place them in a category that would lead to resumed trade in whale meat and products.

In addition to proposals 11.15 through 11.18, in which Norway and Japan call on CITES nations to downlist the Eastern North Pacific gray whale, the South-
ern hemisphere minke whale, the North Pacific/Okhotsk Sea stock of minke whale and the Northeast and central Atlantic stocks of minke whales, the two nations have set out to attack the historic relationship between CITES and IWC, in which CITES cedes to the Whaling Commission management authority for whales. Fortunately, the U.S. government has countered with a proposal of its own, calling on nations to “reaffirm the synergy” between CITES and IWC.

Among the many spurious arguments being used by the whaling nations to justify both a resumption of large scale commercial whaling and international trade in whale products is a claim that whales must be killed because they are eating fish... thus damaging commercial and artisanal fisheries. The United States has countered these claims with a carefully peer-reviewed and scientifically based study of the actual affects of whales on fish stocks. This study shows that whales affect different levels of the food chain, and tend to target non-commercial fish species. Overfishing by humans is more a cause of concern for depleted fish stocks than cetaceans. If anyone is interested in receiving a copy of the U.S. paper, they can contact CSI.

In addition, both Norway and Japan claim in their proposals to downlist the whales that environmental change in whale habitat has been minimal. Obviously with our heightened awareness of global warming and increasing concerns over escalating levels of pollution, such claims are simplistic. Whales face a wide array of threats to their environment, and indeed, in recognition of this fact, the IWC has formed a Working Group to study the effects of environmental threats on whale populations.

The Nairobi meeting promises to be a tough one, and it is clear that this will be a watershed moment in whale conservation. If international trade in whale products is allowed to resume - especially given that the IWC has not been able to implement a strict regime of enforcement and control of the whaling industry due to Japan and Norway’s reluctance to agree to any international oversight of their whaling activities - the future for whales will be grim.

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**CITES, IWC and CSI: Help Us Get There**

CSI has only one fund-raising drive a year, unlike almost all other non-profit organizations. We ask for your direct support to save whales at the annual meetings of the Conference on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and the International Whaling Commission. This appeal is about teamwork, and about asking you to be a part of CSI’s team. We have the best core team imaginable, but we need you on it as well.

As you read this, CSI Board Member Kate O’Connell is in Nairobi, Kenya, representing CSI at the CITES 11th Conference of the Parties (COP11) until its conclusion on 20 April. Kate is a legend within whale conservation circles, with an unrivaled level of experience and knowledge that has come through years of dedicated and sacrificial effort. She represents the UK based Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society in the U.S. Please see Kate’s CITES article elsewhere in this newsletter.

At the IWC meeting this June in Australia CSI will be well represented by Heather Rockwell, Assistant Director of the International Wildlife Coalition in Massachusetts. Heather brings extraordinary skills and experience to IWC issues and is our core in a team effort with other organization’s representatives, including José Truda Pallazo, CSI’s Representative in Brazil, and CSI Board Member Nancy Azzam representing the Windstar Foundation. That is our core team, and we are very fortunate to have them. So are you. So are the whales.

Please consider even a small donation to CSI to support our IWC efforts. We know that the whaling threats may sound strident and similar every year and you may wonder if it will ever end. It will certainly end if we give up. Look through all the issues to the reasons why you care about whales, and why you joined CSI. We won’t quit, and we hope your support won’t either. The whales deserve your support. Send donations to: CSI IWC Campaign, 57 Crossroads Lane, Glastonbury, CT 06033.
In December of 1999, we received a pile of newsletters from the Elsa Nature Conservancy, our sister organization in Japan. Unfortunately, the newsletters are written in Japanese making it a bit difficult to know the details of what Elsa is up to, but we are very encouraged by the English language summaries that were available for a few of the newsletters.

The Elsa Nature Conservancy was established in 1976 with the aim of global nature and environmental protection across a broad spectrum from one’s own doorstep to the sky. Elsa has campaigned for the protection of endangered animals. They have been active in criticizing zoos, safari parks, and aquariums. While the organization sets forth grand ideals, individual members are encouraged to carry out their own modest but diligent activities.

Among the stories in the Elsa newsletter:

**Cetacean Exhibits at Japanese Aquariums Are Protested**

Elsa president Eiji Fujiwara reports that for several years his organization has been active in trying to stop the Nagoya Port Aquarium from plans to bring orcas, belugas, and bottlenose dolphins into their new tanks. A petition was sent to the Nagoya Port Aquarium, the Taiji Whale Museum, and to the Oarai Aquarium, which is collecting sharks and dolphins for a new facility they plan to open in 2002. The petition stated the organization’s opposition to the capture and display of wild whales and dolphins in aquariums, and respectfully requested that the aquariums not only abandon their plans to add wild cetaceans to their collections, but also that the aquariums consider returning cetaceans already being kept there to their natural habitats.

The petition further states reasons for the request, citing the cruelty of keeping wild cetaceans away from family groups in unnatural conditions. It notes that captivity will shorten the lives of cetaceans accustomed to forming their own societies and swimming over a wide range. Captive cetaceans at aquariums do not demonstrate their true wild nature. To display captive cetaceans and pretend that their exhibited behavior is natural is not educational, in that it spreads misunderstanding about the creatures and perpetuates the myth that humans can treat animals in any way that they choose.

Capturing wild animals, the petition goes on to say, causes major problems to those animals that remain in the wild, adversely affecting the ecosystem. Irresponsible capture can contribute to the extinction of the species. The petition concludes by noting that the aquariums’ stated policy and claim is that they promote the conservation of species.

Of special interest to CSI is a note that the Nagoya aquarium is negotiating with the Miami Seaquarium in Florida for the purchase of an orca named Lolita. Conservation groups have been campaigning for Lolita’s release into the wild. There is fear that the Seaquarium will find it more profitable to sell Lolita to the Japanese aquariums than to release her to the wild.

**A Solitary Dolphin in the Red Sea**

An article tells of a female dolphin which has captured the hearts of people living along the Red Sea in the eastern Sinai of Egypt. The solitary dolphin showed up roughly five years ago and was affectionately named Oline by the locals. After she befriended the fisher folk of a local Bedouin tribe, word got around, attracting visitors from around the world. This provided the historically poor Bedouins with an opportunity to develop businesses around the tourism. Oline was considered a gift from Allah by the locals.

In December of 1996 Oline gave birth to a male calf. Sadly, the calf died the following March. The cause of the calf’s death is unknown. The article notes that Oline is pregnant again, indicating that she is in contact with other dolphins. All wish her and her offspring well.

**Mother Dolphin and Calf off Toshima**

Since 1995 a dolphin has been living in the sea off the island of Toshima and has become familiar with the islanders, fisher folk, and divers there. In 1998, she gave birth to a calf. The villagers have been working
to protect both the mother and calf, going so far as to register them as residents of the island. The mother was named Koko, the calf Piko.

All is not well, however, as fishing concerns based on the nearby islands of Ni-jima and Shikine-jima are claiming that they have the right to fish off of Toshima. Since the Ni-jima concerns use huge nets, which can trap and drown dolphins, Toshima islanders are fearing for Koko and Piko’s lives. Elsa is helping the Toshima islanders in their efforts to protect the two dolphins.

The article noted that Mr. Shinsaku Tomita, the village chief in Toshima, received a letter from the 7th annual Whales Alive Conference thanking him for his cooperation and efforts to protect Koko and Piko.

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Tuna/Dolphin Update

*By Kate O’Connell, CSI Board*

In 1997 changes in U.S. legislation proposed lifting a U.S. embargo on foreign tuna (mainly Mexican, Venezuelan and Colombian) caught with dolphins in encircling nets and would let the dolphin-safe label apply to those catches unless the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service found that the practice ‘significantly harmed dolphins’. As Whales Alive! readers will recall, last April the U.S. Secretary of Commerce ruled that the Eastern Pacific tuna fleet was not causing such significant harm to dolphins, and a proposed change in the dolphin safe definition could soon take place. The labeling practice is scheduled to be implemented April 11, when the U.S. Commerce Department plans to allow tuna caught by Mexican boats to carry a dolphin-safe label as long as observers on the boats see no dolphins killed or injured in the encircling nets.

However, on April 3rd, just as Whales Alive! goes to print, several U.S. environmental groups faced off against the U.S. government in court, asking U.S. Federal District Judge Thelton Henderson to preclude the Clinton administration from changing the current definition of “dolphin-safe” tuna (no nets set on dolphins at all) to allow tuna caught with dolphins that are netted and released.

The U.S. Congress first restricted dolphin kills by U.S. tuna boats in 1972 and later imposed similar restrictions on foreign fleets that wished to export tuna to the United States. Judge Henderson is no newcomer to the debate; it was based on his rulings in the early nineties that caused the embargoes to be implemented against foreign tuna. The ruling is expected soon; please watch the CSI web site for further updates on the subject.

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Whale-Watching in Vava’u, Tonga, an Important Economic Resource

*By Mark B. Orams, Ph.D., Centre for Tourism Research, Massey University at Albany, New Zealand*

The Vava’u island group in the northern part of the Kingdom of Tonga in the South Pacific is an area with a growing reputation as a whale watching destination. Each year humpback whales migrate from Antarctic waters to Tonga between July and November to give birth and mate. In the 1960s and 70s a small scale whaling industry existed in Tonga where local villagers, mainly in the northern island group of Vava’u, would hunt whales and utilise them as a source of food. These whaling practices were banned by royal decree in 1978 and whales have remained protected in Tongan waters since that time.

In the past five years a fledgling whale watching industry has become established in Vava’u and it appears to be making a major contribution to the development of tourism in the area. However, the pro-whaling organisation the World Council of Whalers along with some locals, have been actively promoting a resumption of whaling practices in Tonga. Coincident with a visit from World Council of Whalers representatives in August 1999, a female humpback whale was butchered near the capital Nuku’olofa and the meat dis-
tributed for local consumption. Consequently, conservation and tourism organisations and government officials in Tonga became concerned over the potential impact of a possible resumption of whaling practices in the area. As a result, a study supported by the Cetacean Society International was designed to provide an assessment of the economic benefits of these animals as a tourism resource for the islands. In addition, the study assessed the potential impact of a resumption of whaling on the whale watching industry in the area.

Results from this study reveal that whales are an important tourism attraction in Vava’u. 43% of air holiday-makers and 37% of yacht visitors considered that the whales were important, or extremely important reasons for their visit to Vava’u. Even more significant are the numbers of visitors who went whale watching during their stay. Over half (56%) of all air-visitors (during the July - October period) went on a commercial whale watch during their stay. In addition, almost all charter yacht holiday-makers (35% of all air holiday-makers chartered yachts) watched whales from their yacht at some stage during their holiday. Thus, 78% of all air holiday-makers went whale watching. Of those visitors traveling via private yacht, four per cent went on a commercial whale watch, 32% watched whales from their own yacht and a further 29% stated that they intended to do so during their stay in Vava’u. So, it is estimated that about half of all yacht visitors during the July - October season watched whales in Vava’u.

The 900 whale watchers who traveled via aircraft and the 400 whale watchers on yachts contributed between T$78,000 and T$116,000 in direct expenditure on whale watching in Vava’u each season. Furthermore, those visitors to Vava’u who came specifically to watch whales spent an additional T$567,847 on accommodation, food, transport, souvenirs and other items whilst in Vava’u. The five permitted whale watch operators in Vava’u spent an estimated T$54,464 on their whale watch operations and employees of those whale watch businesses spent an additional T$44,000 in Vava’u each season. Consequently, the “use” value (the direct, indirect and induced expenditure) of whales as a tourism resource in Vava’u is estimated to be between T$746,000 and T$784,000 each year.

This calculation of the economic benefit of whale watching in Vava’u only takes into account the first (expenditure of whale tourists) and second round (expen- diation of whale watch businesses and their employees) of spending of whale watching related income. It does not incorporate the spending of other businesses supported by whale tourists (for example, accommodation providers, restaurants, transportation businesses and their employees), nor does it account for the subsequent rounds of re-spending of whale watch related income. Thus, the true multiplier effect of whale tourists’ expenditure is not calculated. Consequently, the calculation of whale watch revenue of T$750,000 is an underestimate of the total economic benefit of whale watching to the Vava’u community. This would exceed T$1,000,000 each year.

The number of whales that visit Vava’u each year is relatively small. While an estimated 300 - 700 individual whales may visit Tongan waters annually, not all of these whales visit Vava’u. In addition, the whales that visit Vava’u stay for a relatively short time. There are, therefore, only a limited number of whales actually in Vava’u waters available for “watching” at any one time. Thus, while 300 - 700 whales may seem to be an “adequate” number for a tourism attraction, the reality is only a very small proportion of that number is “available” for whale watching. Each individual whale is therefore economically important for the area. Over an expected 50 year life span for a humpback whale, an individual whale could be worth many millions of dollars to the Vava’u community as a whale watching resource.

An additional issue identified in the study that is significant are the environmental attitudes of tourists visiting Vava’u. A series of attitudinal statements were presented to respondents in the questionnaire and their level of agreement/disagreement solicited. The results were heavily skewed indicating a high level of consistency across respondents. Both yacht visitors (83%) and air holiday makers (95%) are opposed or strongly opposed to the commercial hunting of whales. While the level of opposition to indigenous hunting of whales for local consumption is not as great, it is still strong for air holiday-makers (62%) but more evenly distributed amongst yacht visitors. Respondents were also asked to consider whether the hunting of whales at a particular location would reduce their likelihood of visiting that area, 62% of yacht visitors and 78% of air holiday-makers agreed that it would. Finally, a specific statement testing respondents propensity to visit Vava’u if whales were hunted there was used. Again, this revealed a strong level
of consistency across respondents with 65% of yacht visitors and 73% of air holiday-makers agreeing that they would be less likely to visit Vava’u if whales were hunted there.

These attitudinal tests show, not surprisingly, that the great majority of visitors to Vava’u are opposed to any consumptive use of whales. The great majority of current holiday-makers to Vava’u are attracted by the pristine marine environment, the relatively undeveloped nature of the area and the genuine natural experiences they can have there. Experiencing whales is an important component of those experiences for many. It is, therefore, important to recognise the environmentally sensitive paradigm of these visitors because it indicates that any change in the protective status of whales and resumption of whaling practices, even on a small scale, would likely displace a large proportion of the current visitors to Vava’u. Thus, there is a likely “opportunity cost” with regard to any lethal use of the whales in Vava’u. It appears unlikely that a whale watching industry could co-exist with a lethal use of whales in Tonga.

If whales remain protected in Tonga the future for whale watching in Vava’u is positive. It is an industry that already makes a significant contribution to Vava’u and to Tonga. It is poised to become even more significant both economically and, perhaps more significantly, socially. How Tonga and Tongans are viewed by the international community and by themselves may well be defined by the approach taken in the future management of the whales that have visited their waters for so long.

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**Victory for the Gray Whale and Vizcaino Biosphere Reserve!**

On 2 March Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo and officials of Mitsubishi Corp. announced that the government of Mexico and Mitsubishi Corp. would not continue to pursue construction of a salt works project adjacent to San Ignacio lagoon, a major calving area for the gray whale. The deciding factor was the “national and world importance and the uniqueness of the Vizcaino Biosphere Reserve”, President Zedillo told a news conference. This tremendous victory represents the diligent efforts of many environmental organizations, notably the Natural Resources Defense Council, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Earth Island Institute, Greenpeace, and a large coalition of Mexican groups. Please thank Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo.

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**News Notes**

*By William Rossiter, CSI President*

**The Cape Cod Stranding Network**

Cape Cod, Massachusetts, has the dubious distinction of being one of the world’s rare “hotspots” for cetacean strandings. There have been so many events over the years that Cape Cod Bay is a living laboratory for understanding natural causes of mass strandings. Its history also serves as an example of the best and worst in human responses. Many individual whales, dolphins, porpoises, seals and marine turtles also strand, and all deserve and require responses by law. In the past decades the region’s unique blend of scientific facilities, aquariums, animal welfare organizations, local organizations and hundreds of volunteers have produced occasional problems as conflicts between expert and dedicated people occasionally reduced the efficiency and success of rescue efforts.

As a solution, the Cape Cod Stranding Network was recently established to coordinate human responses to local events, particularly the dramatic mass strandings that can quickly overwhelm all available resources. With a Board made up of all major responding organizations, the CCSN has consolidated all resources under the general goal of humane care and scientific investigation of all stranded marine mammals. We urge you to support the CCSN by becoming a member. Please contact Program Director Katie Touhey or Liz Pomfret at P.O. Box 287, Buzzards Bay, MA 02532
CSI is pleased that the rescue pontoons we purchased from Project Jonah in New Zealand some years ago, and donated to stranding recovery operations on the Cape, are a ready part of the increasingly sophisticated responses. With our long history of interest in strandings, particularly the potential for on-scene rescue, rehabilitation, and release to the wild, CSI has researched and networked worldwide responses to stranding events since the 80’s. These files will be donated to the CCSN as well.

The Cape Cod Stranding Network responded to two long-finned pilot whales that stranded at Chatham on Cape Cod 27 June. The whales were successfully rehabilitated at Mystic Aquarium, Connecticut, and released 20 October off the coast of Rhode Island. Both whales had satellite tracking devices that reported their dive times, depths, and positions for 132 days. This remarkable record not only illuminated much about this deep water species, but proved conclusively that stranded cetaceans can survive long after release. For details, including the whales’ track, please see http://www.mysticaquarium.org. CSI congratulates Mystic and the Network for their achievement, and we look forward to the day when such successful releases are routine. Many hundreds of cetaceans have been rehabilitated and released at or close to their stranding site, particularly in countries without close captive facilities, or when the group’s numbers could not be accommodated. Increasingly sophisticated techniques have demonstrated how to triage and treat animals, reestablish equilibrium and muscle tone, group stability and cohesion, and coordinate an on-site release that works. But even as the whales swim away with vigor there is no way to verify their survival unless they can be tracked remotely for a reasonable time. The low-tech solutions work, but the high-tech people demand proof.

Entanglements

A ban on purse seine fishing in Queensland waters, Australia, was begun in early March, more than a year after Department of Primary Industries (DPI) figures revealed purse seine fishing for pilchards within the state’s 12km limit had entrapped 76 dolphins and killed nine in a 12 month period. The dolphins died in 1997 and 1998, the figures were not released until 1999, and the ban was not imposed for over a year after that, bringing criticism from the Opposition for not banning the fishing method immediately after the dolphin death figures were released. The dolphin fatalities led to the seven-member Queensland Fisheries Management Authority being fired and an emergency two-month ban on purse seine fishing being issued. The ban will not apply in federal waters, including areas of the Great Barrier Reef.
Marine Park Authority.

About 400 dead dolphins washed ashore on western French beaches in late February, victims of French and Spanish trawlers. The trawlers drag funnel-shaped “pelagic nets” in search of schooling fish, and have had to become larger, faster, and more sophisticated to catch dwindling fish stocks in a cycle of overfishing and economic pressures now seen all over the world. Since the introduction of these nets at the end of the 1980’s dead dolphin strandings have increased by six times. The vast majority of the dead dolphins sink to the bottom of the sea. Estimates of the total kill run into the thousands killed every year. Ironically those fishermen who will discuss the problem call it “overproduction”.

Can NMFS Find the Right Way to Save Right Whales?

Perhaps 325 North Atlantic right whales are still alive. Extinction is certain unless fewer than four whales per decade die from human causes. But the numbers keep slipping down. Do we give up? CSI has always supported a maximum effort to save this population, and we are as frustrated as anyone at the way things are going. Only one calf was known to be born this year, amplifying the latest research that suggests that this population is failing to reproduce, and causing speculation about the role of human pollution in this failure. One whale is known to have died this year from entanglement in fishing lines. Two whales were also known to have been killed last year, one from a ship strike, one from gill nets. A 20-year old male right whale, with a probably fatal entanglement from a lobster pot line, eluded the heroic efforts of the rescue team led by the Center for Coastal Studies in early March. The Center also takes a very active role in mitigations of the major threat, ship strikes. However, with 62% of surviving right whales bearing scars from nets and other fishing gear, part of the solution is to reduce entanglements. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) held a February workshop to determine ways commercial fishing might be modified without shutting down the industry. Fishing line that dissolved when it chafes into oily blubber, computer-activated buoys that surface when commanded, and neutrally buoyant lines linking pots and net anchors are among ideas yet to be tested. Perhaps you can invent gear that will save both whales and fishermen. Don’t leave it up to the government.

NMFS is facing increasing criticism for not using $450,000 available to fund experiments with modified fishing gear. Over 3.8 million dollars was appropriated in October to save the North Atlantic right whales, and concerns are being raised that NMFS has fiddled around with how to spend it while whales die, and may try to use up to half this total for other purposes. NMFS’s efforts to save this species include supporting the 1998 Large Whale Take Reduction Plan, whale disentanglement program, gear modifications and closures in critical habitat areas, a sighting program to notify large ships and fishermen of whales in their area, directed research on the right’s biology and habits, developing technological solutions, and efforts to educate fishermen. But if it is not working it is not enough.

On 3 March the Conservation Law Foundation of Boston filed a 60-day notice of intent to sue NMFS under the Endangered Species Act, charging that the federal agency is failing to save the right whale from extinction. The lawsuit targets NMFS in its licensing of lobster pots and gill nets, both of which have entangled right whales. CLF’s successful 1994 lawsuit charging the federal government with mismanaging fish stocks resulted in closures of large areas of the ocean to fishing and drastic cutbacks in fishing. No one really wants that to happen here, but the responsible agency is not acting fast enough, or creatively enough, and whales and men will suffer as a result. And of course, with NMFS approval and in right whale waters, the Navy just tested sonar gear implicated in other whale strandings (see related article on page 1).

Harassment

In February, 2nd Circuit District Court (Maui, Hawaii) Judge Shackley Raffetto held an arraignment and plea hearing for the Pacific Whale Foundation (PWF), which was cited on 91 misdemeanor charges for allegedly conducting whale research in Hawaiian waters before a state permit was issued in February 1998. The federal government has also charged PWF with seven civil violations under the MMPA and Endangered Species Act. The Foundation pleaded not guilty, a hearing on the federal charges was scheduled for late March, and a trial will begin in May.

The underlying issue here is harassment of cetaceans,
but as that often cannot be quantified, or even defined to fit every situation, rules are made to limit the potential for harassment. The underlying question here is when are even well-intentioned human activities focused on wild cetaceans excessive, and how can they be mitigated or moderated short of a long and humiliating legal process? If a situation results in legal action now it generally suggests a long history of complaints. Film makers, researchers, ecotourist operators, conservationists and people who just love whales and dolphins may justify their actions based on their belief that they care or know too much to ever do harm. There are countless examples of potential harassment passed over in research papers, and whole industries continuously press the envelope. Attempts to change participants’ behavior are rejected with a righteous indignation.

CSI has funded several studies of human impacts because we all need to know our limits. The most recent was by Dr. Mark B. Orams, Massey University, New Zealand, on the sociological impacts of whale watching in Tonga, where the question is whether to watch them or to eat them. The general rule is that if you are a participant you cannot judge your impact; you are so deeply biased you will justify too much. Observers are also inadequate, either by being unable to tell what is really happening, or because they have automatic biases about what they think is happening. Very rarely the behavior of the cetacean gives a clue how they feel about it. Most often we must make a good guess. Speaking as one who has pressed the envelope without wanting to, or knowing it at the time, it begins and ends with self discipline. Should we allow ourselves to get that close? Why?

**Modern Japan: a Whaling Culture?**

The Japanese whaling fleet returned on 6 April with 439 minke whales slaughtered in the Antarctic, destined to be sold as food. The IWC loophole under which the Japanese have carried out this sham research whaling since the IWC’s 1986 moratorium has produced a lot of meat and very little science.

Meanwhile, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and Greenpeace released on 16 March the results of a survey of 1,185 Japanese adults on attitudes about whaling and whale meat consumption. The survey was conducted by Britain’s leading opinion research company MORI, in partnership with the well-known Nippon Research Center in Japan. It indicated that, in contrast to their government’s position, the people of Japan no longer consider whaling to be an integral part of their cultural heritage. About 55% of the Japanese public had no opinion or were neutral regarding commercial whaling, 14% opposed whaling outright, 11% supported commercial whaling, and 20% reported that the reason for killing whales would affect whether they supported whaling. In addition, about 61% had not eaten whale meat since childhood, if at all, and just 1% eat it as much as once a month.

The Japanese government most often cites cultural and traditional values as the main reason for hunting whales. In their report, MORI disproves this theory, showing that “the Japanese are largely neutral on the perceived importance to them personally of commercial whaling continuing: 24% say it is important, 25% say not - and half are undecided.” Even more dramatically, the report finds that, “Virtually nobody fears Japan’s cultural identity would suffer greatly were whaling to stop. Even among whaling’s defenders, only one in twenty predict a ‘great deal’ of damage if it stopped, and four in ten (42%) say ‘not very much’ or ‘not at all’.” The Japanese delegation to the IWC is not expected to cite this report.

**Captivity**

“PARADISE IS HELL” was the slogan used in a successful campaign in early March, the first ever to close a Mexican dolphin facility. Under the leadership of Dr. Yolanda Alaniz Pasini, President of Conservación de Mamíferos Marinos de México, the Paradise restaurant-bar in Acapulco that featured a bungee jump over a pool displaying two dolphins agreed to have the dolphins removed to a semi-captivity dolphinarium at Xcaret, Cancun. Dr. Alaniz’s group filed a lawsuit against Paradise in January, citing “extreme cruelty”. Dr. Leonardo Ibarra, a dolphin veterinarian, agreed that the dolphins were in danger. Public opinion was growing against Paradise as well. A coalition of over 26 international organizations supported the Paradise campaign. Many other Mexican facilities exhibit dolphins inhumanely, as detailed in a report soon to be made public. CSI hopes that this is the beginning of significant changes in Mexico.

In early March, the London Times reported that
Crimean authorities had completed the sale and transfer to Iran of 27 marine mammals (dolphins, beluga whales, walruses, and sea lions) trained by the former Soviet Navy. Cash-poor Russians even advertise sales on the Internet.

Also in early March, the U.S. Navy flew two female dolphins from San Diego, California, to Sitka, Alaska, for participation in the Northern Edge 2000 military exercise. CSI expressed concern for the cold water exposure of the dolphins, and continues to protest any military use of cetaceans.

On 3 March, Keiko took a major step toward his eventual freedom when he was released from his pen into the larger net-enclosed Klettsvik Bay in Iceland’s Vestmannaeyjar Islands. Check the web site http://www.oceanfutures.org for the latest information on Keiko’s progress.

A male bottlenose dolphin named Playboy died on 29 March at Duisburg Zoo, Germany, ostensibly of hepatitis. Just a few weeks earlier another male, Duphy, died at Duisburg, for a total dead at this one facility of at least 45 dolphins. Three Commerson’s dolphins captured off Chile in the 1980’s recently died and two others are sick with colitis at Sea World of Ohio. Do dolphins and whales generally live as long in captivity as in the wild? “Longer!”, tout the display facility’s public relations. But they do not, even with medical care, stable water and food, and even when free of hazards of the wild such as predation, storms, toxic pollution, and prey shortages. To visualize the death toll from dolphinariums, as these places are called in much of the world, “Walls of Death” have been created by activists with names and details written on small, colored, cutout figures of dolphins. The big displays of hundreds of names dramatically illustrate the staggering toll. But every wall is soon out of date, incomplete, and too large to be widely available. A coalition of international experts are creating a virtual Wall of Death, easily accessible and updated on a web site, that will bring the dramatic and tragic message to anyone who cares. CSI will announce the “EWall” web site as soon as it is available.

Oregon Zoo director Tony Vecchio made telling comments as he discussed the reasons for the Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium being put on notice for probation with the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, a national nonprofit organization that accredits 184 zoos in North America, some of which display cetaceans. “Thousands of animal facilities are licensed by APHIS (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service), and thousands of them do not meet our standards.” As a reminder, the last reauthorization battle for the Marine Mammal Protection Act included a successful lobby by the “Alliance”, a coalition of display facilities led by Sea World, to force the control of captive dolphins from NMFS and give it to APHIS which, according to the Association, has inadequate standards. Port Defiance’s many maintenance problems may lead to the probation, which is tabled for six months. Probation would forestall a Pierce County parks bill that would raise millions of tax dollars for the zoo. The real question is about the logic of using public subsidies to support failing entertainment facilities that exploit animals where insufficient public attendance demonstrates a lack of public interest.

IN MEMORIAM

Captain Aaron Avellar of Provincetown, Massachusetts, USA, passed away 2 February after a courageous two-year fight with cancer. He was 56, and in charge of the world famous Dolphin Fleet whale watch company. Aaron’s father, Al, began the Dolphin Fleet in 1975, the first whale watch business on the East Coast. When Al retired in the early 1990’s Aaron took over and continued to build the business into the successful fleet that runs nine trips a day into one of the world’s premier whale watch areas, showing the way to a hard-pressed competition. Provincetown has become a world-class ecotourism destination thanks to the Dolphin Fleet. Hundreds of thousands of people have seen their first whale because of Aaron, who was often invited to international conferences to share his ideas and experiences.

Aaron’s special gift was magic to watch, in part because it was probably unnoticed by almost all who
benefitted from it; his whale watchers. Many times from
the perspective of my tiny zodiac inflatable boat I could
tell Aaron’s boat even from miles away by the way it
behaved. The whales obviously could too. Aaron and I
shared a special love of finbacks. He brought more
people closer to this awesome, usually aloof species than
anyone I ever knew. Aaron could deftly maneuver his
large vessel exactly as he wanted, as the whales wanted.
A lifetime at sea, an intuitive awareness and love of its
creatures, and unique technical skills allowed all who
came aboard his whale watches to experience something
special. We whales and humans will miss him.

- William Rossiter

L.A. “Nick” Carter passed away on 16 March in
Lusaka, Zambia after several months of illness. While
largely unknown to the public, Nick was a legend to
conservationists fighting international travesties. He was
one of those extraordinary heroes who influence the lives
of all who pass by, as I did first in 1983. A mentor to so
many of the hardest working and most successful con-
servationists, Nick’s work is a memorial to how much
one can do for others. His projects continued until his
death, and his associates will not allow any of his mo-
mentum to be lost. Nick’s efforts on behalf of a mutual
friend, Frank Robson of New Zealand, was the key to
my initial discovery of just a few of Nick’s courageous
accomplishments, some undercover, some very public,
many putting his life in jeopardy. The more that I learned
the more I was astonished, enthralled and stimulated to
try even harder to help suffering creatures. I would ex-
pect that few know much of his full contribution be-
cause so much of it was undercover. I hope that a book
can be written by those who know the secrets that would
pass on his example to generations to follow.

In the words of one friend, “condolences are best
offered to Nature herself, for she shall suffer all the more
in Nick’s absence”. From another: “Nick loved all wild-
life. He was a conservationist in the truest sense, giving
of himself to save what he called the ‘seedcorn’. De-
spite many hardships he never sought to attach blame.
He may have left us in body but his spirit, which touched
so many during his long and fruitful life, lives on”. Nick’s
last words were, “All is well. All is beautiful”.

- William Rossiter

William F. Morgan

One of the Cetacean Society’s earliest and most
faithful members, William F. Morgan, of Old
Wethersfield, Connecticut, died on March 28, at the
age of 75. He and his wife Nancy for many years
helped staff the Society’s membership booth at an-
ual boat shows at the Hartford Civic Center. Bill
was an avid photographer, and worked as Advertis-
ing Art Director at the old Hartford Times, before it
closed in 1976. He also was a founding editor of the
boating newspaper, Soundings. With Nancy, who has
survived him along with eight children and eleven
grandchildren, Bill took exciting films of whale
watching off Cape Cod in the years when this now
worldwide activity was just getting started in the mid-
1970’s. His zest and commitment will be missed by
his many friends in the whale movement.

- Robbins Barstow, CSI Director Emeritus
31 March 2000

This photograph shows Bill and Nancy Morgan at
the first Connecticut Cetacean Society membership
booth at the 1975 Boat Show at the Hartford Civic
Center, with key early supporters in the background.
CSI’s Officers and Board Members for 2000

Following is the list of CSI officers and directors elected at the annual membership meeting on 31 January 2000.

Officers:

President: William Rossiter, Redding
Vice-President: Barbara Kilpatrick, West Hartford
Treasurer: Robert Victor, Glastonbury
Recording Secretary: Lea Brown, Bridgeport
Corresponding Secretary: Open
Membership Chairperson: Brent Hall, Cheshire
Director Emeritus: Robbins Barstow, Wethersfield

Kate O’Connell, West Hartford
George Upton, Glastonbury
Ed Wadstrom, Hartford
Fred Wenzel, Sandwich, MA

Board Alternates:

Tom Callinan, Clinton
Jessica Dickens, Hartford
Michelle Ferreira, Bristol
Pamela Finkle, Seymour
Martha Fitzgerald, Hartford
Ralph Formica, Cromwell
Jeff Mills, Ellington
Cynthia O’Connell, West Hartford
Jean Rioux, East Hartford
Steve Roys, Winsted
Sue Wachtelhausen, Wethersfield

Notes

• CSI is pleased to offer the very attractive 5x7 inch note cards produced by the Nantucket Historical Association. The graphite cover drawings are by CSI’s own gifted artist, shantyman, historical whaling expert and Past President, Don Sineti! At Don’s insistence, in lieu of compensation to Don the Association has sent these sets to CSI as fund-raisers! Anyone familiar with Don’s professional work will agree that his portrayals of the humpback, finback, right, sperm and orca whales are superb, and with a short description on each card’s back applicable to New England’s history, and in support of CSI’s hard work, these cards should be on everyone’s list. Each set of twenty cards is $10.00 plus $3.00 shipping. Send your order to: CSI, P.O. Box 953, Georgetown, CT 06829 U.S.A.

• A computer “screen saver” that puts photographs of whales on the screen when the computer is idle, published by the Whale Conservation Institute, is available for a donation of $20.00 to CSI. Write to: CSI, 57 Crossroads Lane, Glastonbury, CT 06033.

• CSI’s educational flyer on cetaceans in captivity is still available. We will be glad to send one as a sample to anyone who requests it. Contact: CSI, P.O. Box 953, Georgetown, CT 06829 USA.

• Current and previous issues of Whales Alive! can be found on CSI’s World Wide Web site at: http://elfi.com/csihome.html
BECOME A MEMBER OF CSI

Benefits of Cetacean Society International membership include:

* Whales Alive!, a quarterly newsletter with updates on local, national and global issues, PLUS
* Membership meetings let you meet, interact, and learn from whale experts from around the globe, PLUS
* Access to CSI’s unmatched lending library of books and videos about cetaceans, PLUS
* The satisfaction of supporting a small but effective organization that has earned the respect and support of scientists and conservationists around the world.

Name: ___________________________ Date: __________ Phone: ___________________________
Address: ___________________________ Occupation (optional): ___________________________
City: __________________ State: ______ Zip: __________ Available for Volunteering? __________

☐ Regular $15 ☐ Sustaining $100* ☐ New Member
☐ International $20 ☐ Patron $500* ☐ Renewal
☐ Contributing/Family $25 ☐ Receive signed whale drawing by Don Sineti
☐ Supporting $50

☐ Check or money order enclosed (U.S. currency) Charge my: ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard
Card No.: ___________________________ Exp. Date: __________ Signature: ___________________________

Please mail this form to: Cetacean Society International, c/o Brent Hall, 460 Wallingford Road, Cheshire, CT 06410 USA. Note: Amounts over the regular membership cost of $15 constitute tax deductible contributions as provided by law. If your employer has a matching grant program, please enclose the application form; this will double your donation to CSI.