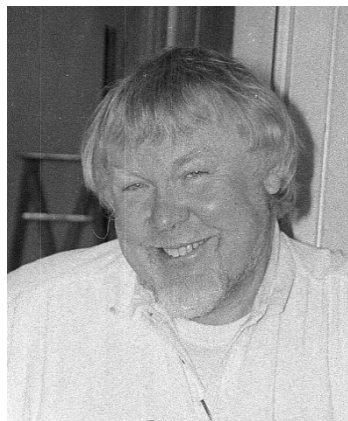




Circular Communication to Members of the Scientific Committee
IWC.SC.220

Ed Mitchell



It is with great sadness that I write to let you know that long-time cetacean scientist and SC member Ed Mitchell passed away earlier this week. As many of you know, Ed was the instigator and inspiration for some innovative approaches to whale stock assessment, such as including behavioural aspects. As a stickler, Ed insisted on rigour in any scientific endeavour.

Ed was an active, sometimes provocative, presence in the Scientific Committee. He produced influential papers on various large whale species including bowhead, humpback, fin, Atlantic right and gray whales as well as on minke, bottlenose, killer and small cetaceans. He led the Canadian government's research programme on North Atlantic large whales from the late 1960s until the 1980s. As a paleontologist, he had a special interest in the evolutionary relationships of cetaceans and was also heavily involved in research on whaling history.

Ed was sole editor of a special issue of the *Journal of the Fisheries Research Board of Canada* published in 1975 – a comprehensive review of small cetaceans across species, regions, fisheries and problems. That volume was in many ways a precursor to the classic *RWCS* Special Issue on gillnets and cetaceans edited by Bill Perrin, Greg Donovan and Jay Barlow published in 1994. The editors acknowledged Ed's influence in their introductory note:

"The founding chairman of the sub-committee was Edward Mitchell, who deserves great credit for bringing the related issues of small cetaceans and incidental kills (of cetaceans both large and small) to the fore in the Committee and the Commission."

In 1975 Ed also produced *Porpoise, Dolphin and Small Whale Fisheries of the World: Status and Problems* - another benchmark that cetacean scientists and conservationists referred to for decades afterward.

Mike Tillman, convenor of a 1977 IWC workshop that led to publication of the *R/IWC* Special Issue on historical whaling records published in 1983 (which incidentally contains the first estimates of historical abundance of Bering-Chukchi-Bering bowhead whales and western North Pacific sperm whales), concluded in his introductory note to the volume:

“Finally, I must say a word of thanks to Dr. E.D. Mitchell who pushed and prodded me into this endeavour – it has provided some rather unique insights into a very special world.”

We will have an opportunity to honour Ed at our opening Plenary session of SC in May 2020 in Cambridge.

In sympathy,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Lent". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Rebecca Lent
Executive Secretary

c.c. Accredited observers to the IWC