



April 2015

Introduction

Welcome to April's IWC News Bulletin.

This month sees many people preparing for the Scientific Committee meeting which begins in San Diego in a few weeks time. Like the Commission itself, the remit and workload of the Scientific Committee has expanded over recent years and it will be another full agenda. I'm pleased to be attending for part of the meeting and I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Commitment, sharing both expertise and time, has always characterised the Scientific Committee. This is also a key factor in the success of the IWC's Global Entanglement Response Network. As you'll read below, for the first time, the group meeting this month includes both the original expert advisory panel and representatives of the new response teams who have benefited from the training. This capacity building programme has made tangible progress. The IWC should be proud of this work, and extend our thanks to all those involved.

Another important topic for both the Scientific Committee and the Commission at the moment is Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling. A lot of work has already been done by governments, scientists and of course the aboriginal communities themselves, but there is more to do. Our aim is to ensure a solid bedrock of science and process is in place before the Commission is next required to set whaling limits. I'm pleased that planning is underway for a workshop to take this work forward in Greenland this September. I know it will benefit from the same commitment that we are lucky enough to see across the diverse programme of IWC work.

Bruno Mainini

IWC Chair

Upcoming Events

1-3 April , La Jolla, California
Workshop: second stage of rangewide review of North Pacific gray whale population structure and status

21-23 April, Provincetown, Massachusetts

Workshop: entanglement response expert panel

20 May (pre-SC66a) San Diego, California

Meeting: Joint Commission Standing Working Group on Whalewatching and SC Whalewatching Subcommittee

21 May (pre-SC66a) San Diego, California

Meeting: CERD Group

21 May (pre-SC66a) San Diego, California

Meeting: Spatial Modelling Group

May 20-June 4, San Diego.

2015 meeting of the IWC Scientific Committee

June 4, San Diego

Joint working group of the IWC Scientific and Conservation Committees

News & Updates

...Entanglement response network-growth and consolidation...

The IWC's Global Whale Entanglement Response Network is meeting officially for the first time at the Center for Coastal Studies in Provincetown. The network has developed from an initiative begun by Norway, the USA and

Australia. Since 2012 almost 400 individuals from 18 countries have been taught safe and professional response techniques through the entanglement response programme, which continues to spread the best practices already developed in some regions, to countries and coastlines all over the world.

This month's workshop brings together the original expert advisory panel and those who have been trained and are now managing their own regional response capabilities.

Participants will analyse experiences and case studies, assess new developments, and review the current curriculum. The workshop also aims to agree global data collection methods. This is crucial to develop a greater understanding of the nature and extent of the problem, and work towards the ultimate goal of preventing entanglements from occurring in the first place. The group will consider whether the IWC Ship Strikes Database model might lend itself to the entanglement issue.

The event is kindly hosted by the Center for Coastal Studies, Provincetown who partner the IWC in this initiative, sharing expertise and providing both facilities and equipment.

[find out more](#)



...Ship strikes on the agenda at 'Whalefest'...

Last month the IWC attended the annual Whalefest exhibition in Brighton, UK, to draw attention to the issue of ship strikes. Fabian Ritter, one of the IWC ship strike database coordinators, took a slot on the Science Stage to explain what we have learnt about ship strikes so far. He also outlined some steps sailors can take to avoid hitting whales, and asked everyone to note the ship strikes database, and use it in the event that they are witness to a collision.

[find out more](#)



...Second workshop of the gray whale rangewide review...

Prompted by surprising new information, the IWC held its first rangewide review workshop on North Pacific gray whales in April 2014. A year later, significant progress has been made and was reviewed at a workshop held in La Jolla, California, 1 -3 April.

Until recently, available evidence had led experts to believe that the eastern and western gray whale populations remained separate, with long but distinct coastal migration routes between breeding grounds in the south and feeding grounds in the north. Doubt was cast on this understanding by an IWC satellite tagging programme which showed that, rather than remaining on the western North Pacific and moving south to breed, three animals moved across to the eastern North Pacific. This new information led scientists to undertake a major review, combining information from satellite tagging with genetic 'fingerprinting' and photo-ID.

The new information has potentially significant implications for conservation and management advice, and led the Scientific Committee of the IWC to begin a Rangewide Review of population structure and status of North Pacific gray whales.

The review began with the workshop in April 2014, which assessed and synthesized all available information, and began development of a modelling framework. That workshop also identified three primary new hypotheses on whale distribution, movements and population structure. These have been incorporated into the modelling framework and tested over the last

twelve months.

The latest workshop, also held in La Jolla, reviewed the results of the intersessional tests and worked to refine the modelling framework. While complex, this programme of work will enable the IWC to update its assessment of the status of gray whales in the North Pacific, and the potential impact of human activities.

[find out more](#)

...IWC Bureau Teleconference...

The Bureau met by teleconference on 26 March. This was their first meeting of the post IWC-65 intersessional period and the agenda was full.

A new performance measurement process was proposed by the Secretariat. This aims to help the Bureau understand and support the work of the 30+ different committees and groups in operation during the two year intersessional period. The Bureau supported the principle and agreed to further exploratory work, with a view to presenting a proposal to the Commission in 2016.

The role and content of the IWC website was also discussed. The Secretary confirmed that a new section on marine debris would be included as part of the current update. As well as the Environmental Concerns section, the update includes new pages on the Commission, Special Permit Whaling, Small Cetaceans and Conservation Management Plans. The Bureau also agreed that the Commission should develop guidance on use of the website, specifically on handling issues that have not been clearly endorsed by the Commission. A new working group comprising Bureau members will develop guidance to be presented to the Commission via the Finance and Administration Committee at IWC66.

Financial statements for the year ending August 31st were accepted. The Bureau noted a surplus of approximately GBP 84000 but agreed to remain vigilant as current forecasts indicated expenditure will be in excess of income in 2017-18.

[find out more](#)

...Expert review panel workshop of NEWREP special permit proposal...

In February, an expert panel met to review Japan's special permit proposal NEWREP-A (New Scientific Whale Research Programme in the Antarctic Ocean). Their report was published on 13 April and generated considerable media interest. The report, and Japan's response to it, are available on the IWC website. These documents will be discussed at the Scientific Committee meeting in May/June, and final Scientific Committee advice on the proposal will be developed. This advice will be put to the Commission at its next meeting in 2016.

[find out more](#)

Thank you for reading. If you have any material for the next IWC Bulletin, please e-mail it to [Kate Wilson](#).

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