



Circular Communication to Members of the Scientific Committee
IWC.SC.216

John Bannister

It is with tremendous sadness that we write to inform you that John Bannister passed away on Saturday 30 June 2018.

John was one of the true giants of the IWC Scientific Committee, contributing to its work for over 50 years. John published his first paper in 1962 before first attending the Committee in 1963 as a delegate of the United Kingdom. He moved to Australia, where his work focused on advancing sperm whale biology. John became Curator of Mammals at the Western Australia Museum in Perth from 1967 and was a highly successful Director of that museum from 1975 to his retirement in 1991. From 1970 to 1978 he attended the Committee as a member of the Australian delegation.

John's chairing skills (workshops, sub-committees and the full Committee) were legendary – he was firm, fair and focussed and mixed this with a dry humour and an uncanny grasp of summarising discussions that were outside his normal areas of expertise. He chaired the full Committee from 1980 to 1982 and again from 1997 to 1999. Following his first tenure as chair John returned to the Committee as an Invited Participant and last attended the annual meeting in 2016. He was a longstanding and fully contributing member of the Convenors group, chairing the sub-committee on the Revised Management Procedure for many years. He was particularly committed to the international cruises of the IWC – beginning with the IDCR and SOWER programmes in the Antarctic and then the IWC-POWER programmes in the North Pacific. His commitment to the work of the Scientific Committee was not only expressed in his contributions during the sessions but his enthusiastic participation in the social events that he believed strengthened the sense of belonging to the IWC's scientific community – sharing his skills as a raconteur and even participating remotely at one Scientific Committee Dinner in recent years when ill health meant he couldn't travel.

John led many cetacean projects in Australia but will be remembered, in particular, for his studies of humpback and blue whales off Western Australia and his annual, long-term monitoring surveys of southern right whales off southern Australia from 1976 to 2018 – one of the most valuable long-term datasets in the world.

John was greatly influential throughout his career and he was a mentor and friend to many current members of the Committee. He will be missed greatly and our thoughts are with his family and friends all over the world.

Messages of condolence can be sent to secretariat@iwc.int and will be forwarded to John's family.

Greg Donovan
Head of Science

c.c. Accredited observers to the IWC

Chair: Dr Joji Morishita (Japan)
Vice-Chair: Mr Andrej Bibic (Slovenia)
Executive Secretary: Dr Simon Brockington