Editorial

Welcome to this the final issue of Volume 10 of the *Journal of Cetacean Research and Management*.

2008 has been another successful year for the Journal. A total of 30 papers have been published this year covering a wide range of subjects related to the conservation and management of cetaceans. There have been a total of 120 authors from Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa and North and South America. This year's supplement included the full report of the Scientific Committee held in Anchorage, Alaska in May 2007, as well as the results of five important intersessional workshops. The author and subject index can be found at the end of this issue.

The present issue contains three papers of great relevance to the mitigation of one of the major problems facing cetacean populations (especially small cetaceans) – that of their incidental capture in fishing gear. Two of the papers look at the effect of acoustic deterrents. Palka *et al*. look at the perennial question of the use of pingers, and in particular the question of possible habituation. They examined a dataset for the gillnet fishery in the northeastern USA managed under their harbour porpoise take reduction plan for the years 1999-2007 (some 25,000 gillnet hauls). After taking into account a number of variables, they concluded that at least for the fishery and period they examined, there was no evidence for habituation. They also emphasised the importance of mesh size and proper enforcement of the regulations with respect to pinger use. Pingers were developed and first tested for harbour porpoises. Berrow *et al*. undertook at-sea experiments with a variety of acoustic signals, examining their effect on the behaviour of common dolphins in Irish waters. They concluded that at their present stage of development, pingers may not provide a consistently effective deterrent for common dolphins. The final paper by Trippel *et al*. takes a different approach with respect to entanglements of the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale off the eastern coast of Canada. In this case they examine the gear itself and in particular the addition of barium sulphate to rope and twine to produce a neutrally buoyant groundline with a view to maintaining a lower profile in the water and to have a lower (but sufficient) breaking strength. With respect to harbour porpoises in the same area the barium sulphite increased the acoustic detectability of the nets. In both cases the authors consider that barium sulphite modified gear shows potential for reducing entanglement deaths.

The IWC Scientific Committee has pioneered the use of the management procedure approach for the management of large whale fisheries (either commercial or aboriginal subsistence whaling) which *inter alia* involves the use of a simulation modelling framework to incorporate uncertainty. Punt looks at the modelling of parameters related to maximum sustainable yield with stochastic population dynamics. Aldrin *et al*. examine the properties of the *Catch Limit Algorithm* that forms the basis of the Revised Management Procedure for commercial whaling, particularly in the context of 'tuning' and the appropriate simulated management time horizon.

The issue of stock structure and abundance and trends are clearly of major importance in management. Rugh *et al*. examine the use of photo-identification data to examine mixing and stock structure for the Beaufort-Chuckchi-Bering Sea bowhead whales. They conclude that the wide mixing and near-random distribution of resighting dates throughout the spring migration is indicative of single stock of whales. This provides another indication of the value of photo-identification data. Lowry *et al*. examine trends in aerial survey counts of white whales in Bristol Bay Alaska from 1993-2005 to examine increase rates (not absolute abundance). Over the period, they estimated an increase rate of around 4.8% (95% 2.1-7.5%). Afsal *et al*. look at the use of platforms of opportunity to look at cetacean distribution in an area where it is not financially feasible for dedicated surveys to occur (the Indian EEZ and contiguous seas). The final paper in the volume by Reeves *et al*. looks at historical whaling records to determine whether they can shed light on the past occurrence of the critically endangered western gray whale in the Okhotsk Sea for comparison with present day records.

Finally, I would like to thank the 43 scientists that have acted as anonymous reviewers for the papers published in Volume 10 (Aguilar, A.; Bannister, J.L.; Barlow, J.; Best, P.B.; Burt, L.; Butterworth, D.S.; Clark, C.W.; Cooke, J.G.; Desportes, G.; Eigaard, O.R.; Forney, K.A.; Gales, N.; Hammond, P.S.; Heide-Jorgensen, M-P.; Jefferson, T.A.; Kasuya, T.; Larsen, F.; Lawson, J. Leaper, R.; Martin, A.R.; McDonald, M.; Muir, D.; Northridge, S.; Notarbartolo di Sciara, G.; O'Hara, T.; Oien, N.; Palka, D.; Pastene, L.A.; Perrin, W.F.; Punt, A.E.; Raga, J.A.; Read, A.J.; Reeves, R.R.; Rugh, D.J.; Secchi, E.; Skaug, H.J.; Suydam, R.S.; Tougaard, J.; Van Waerebeek, K.; Wade, P.R.; Wells, R.S.; Wilson, B.; Zerzini, A.). Without their diligence and hard work, the papers in the *Journal*, and more importantly the contribution they make to the wise management and conservation of cetaceans, would be considerably poorer. A full list of the reviewers and their affiliations can be found at: http://www.iwcoffice.org/publications/contents_reviewers.htm#review.

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Editor