



July 2016

## Introduction

Our attention is now focused on the biennial Commission meeting in October, and rightly so. This is our opportunity to assess progress, exchange ideas and explore new initiatives.

We concluded the last meeting in 2014 with an ambitious and diverse programme of work agreed and five Resolutions adopted. During the intersessional period there has been progress in many areas and against all of the Resolutions. Increasingly the IWC is focusing on common ground, using its long-standing expertise and global reach to address a wide range of issues effecting - or potentially effecting - cetaceans today.

The Global Entanglement Response Network is perhaps the most advanced example. This programme has now trained over 500 people from 30 countries. In recent months it has also expanded in a number of ways: three new regions have hosted training workshops, Spanish language training has been conducted by some of the programmes own apprentices, and the first advanced training workshop has been held. It is increasingly viewed as a blueprint from which we might learn lessons and build networks to address other issues, tailored to specific needs but based on the principle of using the international forum of the IWC to share information and improve capability.

Bruno Mainini

IWC Chair

### Upcoming Events

**July, Provincetown, USA**

Apprenticeship: Chilean entanglement responders

**8-9 Sept, Los Organos, Peru**

Workshop: entanglement response training

**14-16 Sept, Imbituba, Brazil**

Workshop: entanglement response training

**20-28 October, Portoroz, Slovenia**

Meeting: IWC66, biennial meeting of the IWC

## News & Updates

### **...Busy and productive: the 2016 Scientific Committee meeting...**

The report of the sixty sixth meeting of the IWC Scientific Committee is now published and records discussions and conclusions across a wide range of issues. Fifteen sub-groups covered subjects from ecosystem modelling and stock definition to environmental concerns and human impacts on whales and their habitats.

Special permit (scientific) whaling was also on the agenda, as was the mass stranding of 360 sei whales in Chile, described by experts as unprecedented.

Perhaps one of the most significant statements made by the Scientific Committee this year concerned plight of the vaquita. Illegal fishing has reduced the population of this critically endangered porpoise by 92% in less than twenty years. As scientists considered an abundance estimate of less than sixty animals, the Committee issued its starkest warning to date. 'Without action the vaquita will be gone - the second entirely preventable cetacean extinction we will have witnessed in ten years.'

[find out more](#)



### **...Second joint meeting of the Scientific and Conservation Committees...**

Members of the Scientific and Conservation Committees met immediately after the Scientific Committee meeting, as they did in 2015. The aim was to enhance coordination between the two groups and many of the issues discussed were related to process: effective implementation and evaluation of conservation-related recommendations, strategic planning within the Conservation Committee and collaboration with other organisations. Several current topics involving both committees were also considered, including sanctuaries and conservation management plans.

[find out more](#)

### **...A successful Welfare Workshop in South Africa...**

Two workshops were held back-to-back in May. The first focused on non-hunting welfare issues and brought together thirty five scientists, policy makers, veterinarians and conservation practitioners from 14 countries. The group considered the wider context of welfare science and how this might inform the IWC's approach to welfare issues. The group assessed the concept of a welfare assessment tool which might be developed to help the IWC understand and prioritise welfare issues, as part of an ongoing programme to integrate welfare considerations more strategically into IWC work.

[find out more](#)

### **...Focus on outreach and cooperation at the Strandings Workshop...**

The Strandings Workshop, also at Kruger National Park, South Africa, is the third to focus on this important issue in recent years. Euthanasia of stranded whales, often the most humane response to an animal's suffering, was the focus of an expert gathering in 2012, and a workshop in 2015 considered handling of mass strandings.

At the South Africa workshop in May, the focus was on development and dissemination of practical advice. Reports from this, and the earlier Mass Strandings Workshop were considered at this year's Scientific Committee meeting which has recommended that an expert group assemble in order to establish best practice and develop guidance



documents which can be shared with countries seeking to learn from best practice or build new stranding response capability.

[find out more](#)

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### **...Entanglement Prevention Workshop highlights the challenge of identifying fishing gear...**

Also in May, forty experts from eight countries attended a workshop on Entanglement Prevention in New Hampshire, USA. The aim was to exchange information and assess the effectiveness of devices and techniques that might help prevent either the incidence or the severity of entanglements.

In order to build a clearer picture of the types of fishing gear (or debris) that pose the greatest hazard, more information is needed, but this can only be obtained when entanglement responders manage to release and identify the entangled gear. To make this task easier, clearer marking of fishing gear was recommended, including repeat marks that can be traced if incomplete gear is retrieved.

[find out more](#)



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### **...Entanglement response training in Greenland...**

The most recent entanglement response training workshop has completed off the coast of Nuuk in Greenland. The three-day workshop comprised of one day in the classroom and two days at sea.

The classroom discussions covered the nature of the entanglement threat in the region, as well as relevant regulations, tools and safety protocols, before practicing the theory out on the water. One boat simulates the whale, trailing ropes and gear on which the trainees, in a second boat, practice response techniques.



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### **...Entanglement response apprenticeships underway in Provincetown, USA...**

Two new apprentices from Chile are currently working with experts from IWC and the Center for Coastal Studies, Provincetown, USA, where they will learn a range of advanced skills, equipping them to handle more difficult entanglement responses and to deliver training themselves. The three week-long apprenticeship will cover a range of skills and issues, including boat safety regulations and design of the custom-built disentanglement tools.

This year's programme follows last year's successful apprenticeship. As well as leading or participating in a number of entanglement responses (including during the training!) the two Mexican apprentices trained in 2015 have gone on to establish a new Spanish-language training capability and have delivered their first training workshops.

[find out more](#)

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