
Editorial

Welcome to this the first issue of the seventh volume of the *Journal of Cetacean Research and Management*. This volume contains eleven papers covering a wide range of management issues.

Wise management decisions require certain fundamental information and one of the most basic parameters is population abundance. One of the most encouraging success stories of cetacean conservation is the recovery of the eastern North Pacific stock of gray whales. The population was reduced to very low levels by the turn of the 20th century by whaling but has subsequently recovered since protection from commercial whaling (limited aboriginal subsistence whaling has continued throughout the period) and is now thought to be back to its pre-exploitation abundance. The paper by Rugh *et al.* reports on abundance estimates made during the period 1997-2002. This is a particularly interesting period because it includes a period of high natural mortality in 1999 and 2000. Management of aboriginal subsistence whaling requires not only information on the stock structure and abundance of the whales but also information on the catches themselves. Koski *et al.* provide information on a long time series (1973-2000) of catches from the community of Kakovik in the extreme northeast of Alaska, where bowhead whales are taken.

One of the most important threats to cetacean populations is their incidental capture in fisheries. There are three papers relevant to this issue. The first paper, by Cavortata *et al.*, attempts to look at one aspect of finding a solution to the entanglement problem for the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale. The second, by Dawson and Slooten, concerns the management of gillnet bycatches in New Zealand where there is particular concern over the situation of the Hector's dolphin. The final paper, by Gillespie *et al.*, reports on abundance estimates for the endangered Baltic Sea population of harbour porpoises, whose survival is threatened by incidental captures.

An important contribution the *Journal* makes is to publish papers on species and areas for which there is relatively little

information. Such baseline data are important in determining what, if any, management and conservation actions are necessary. In this issue, information is provided on humpback whales along the coast of Ecuador (Felix and Haase) and the pygmy right whale in the southwestern Pacific Ocean (Matsuoka *et al.*).

A relatively recently identified threat to cetaceans concerns the impact of noise. Clark and Norman provide results from an experiment conducted by the US Navy in 2001 and discuss the nature of proposed mitigation measures and assess their performance. The issue of noise will be also addressed in forthcoming papers in volume 7, particularly with respect to beaked whales.

Good management is dependent on knowledge of population structure. There are two relevant papers in this issue. The first, by Rankin *et al.*, examines acoustic data collected by IWC-sponsored cruises in the Southern Hemisphere to examine the feasibility of using acoustics to distinguish between two sub-species of blue whales in the Southern Ocean. The second, by Sanino *et al.*, uses the more traditional approach of examining mitochondrial DNA to ascertain stock structure of common bottlenose dolphins in Chilean and Peruvian waters.

Local management requires knowledge of the distribution, movements and site fidelity of animals. Photo-identification studies can be a powerful tool in obtaining such knowledge as well as monitoring abundance and the final paper in this issue, by Bearzi, examines the bottlenose dolphins found in Santa Monica Bay, California – an area subject to considerable anthropogenic disturbance as well as potentially being affected by El Niño.

Finally can I draw your attention to the new *Guide for Authors* included at the end of this issue. There are a number of modifications so please read them carefully before submitting manuscripts. Not following the guidelines may result in considerable delay in the consideration of your manuscript!

G.P. DONOVAN
Editor