



## Whales Don't Kill Fish, People Kill Fish

The cetaceans aren't to blame for declines in fish populations, according to new reports by conservation groups.

By Dawn Stover Posted 06.26.2008 at 6:19 pm



Humpback whale feeding: Photo by NOAA

Whalers in Japan, Norway and Iceland claim that whales are eating fish that might otherwise provide food for humans. Killing whales means more fish for people to eat—in fact, it's a matter of food security for developing countries, the argument goes.

Not so, say representatives from [Humane Society International](#), [World Wildlife Fund](#) and the [Lenfest Ocean Program](#). At this week's meeting of the [International Whaling Commission](#) in Santiago, Chile, the three conservation groups presented reports debunking the notion that whales are taking food out of the mouths of poor people.

One of the reports studied coastal fisheries in Northwest Africa and found that great whales spend only a few months in that area during their global migrations, and typically eat prey that fishermen can't—or wouldn't want to—catch. And even in places where whales *do* eat the same type of fish as humans, removing whales wouldn't necessarily increase the amount of fish available because other predators would probably pick up the slack, according to the report by Wilf Swartz and Daniel Pauly of [The University of British Columbia Fisheries Centre](#).

So, why are fish stocks in severe decline? The conservation groups say it's because of over-consumption by humans, not whales. Affluent humans, that is. Less than half the fish caught in the South Pacific, Caribbean and West Africa (where some countries are calling for increased whaling) end up on local plates; most are sold to markets in wealthier nations, according to data from the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization.

### 4 COMMENTS

Arkmage  
from  
McKinleyville,  
California

Article Rating:  
06/26/08 at 8:05 pm

When I was a little me and my brothers would go to get fish chips, we did not care were it came from or if it would run out. All we new or cared is it tasted good. But now almost fifty years latter I know were it comes from and I know how it is prossessed and I know it will not last for ever if we are not carefull in another fifty years we may be saying to our children I remember when the ocean was full of all types of fish and whales and..... And it will not be the Whales or the porpis that wiped out the oceans. But us we will have to look in the mirror see and know it was us, man kind the one who could have stoped it.

0 out of 0 people found this comment helpful

scampf

Article Rating:  
06/26/08 at 11:56 pm

Since they claim to harvest whales only for research purposes, isn't it convenient that they would come to this conclusion?

Whales eat the fish so it's ok to kill whales? What kind of twisted logic is that?

Oh wait,

I forgot who I was referring too.

0 out of 1 people found this comment helpful

ND3G

Article Rating:  
06/27/08 at 4:58 pm

There are still Norwegian whalers??? Get another job already!

0 out of 0 people found this comment helpful

marcoparigi

Article Rating:

06/27/08 at 6:43 pm

A recent theme in ecological research has been the discovery that not all species are as important as each other in a regional ecosystem. In fact, if one has to choose a species to protect, it is always the apex predator (top of the food chain) that should be chosen. For instance the extermination in the 1920's of the Wolf from Yellowstone National Park had been found to cause damage to the whole ecology without a single other animal or plant being damaged by human hands. This has been found to be true for all regional ecosystems. Thus the Crocodile really is due protection in the rivers, The Lion really is the king of the beasts in parts of Africa, Cougars, Bears etc. are very important in their ecological niches as well. In Yellowstone for instance, the elk (Reindeer?) are perceived by humans to be important because they are big and beautiful, but the Wolf is more important even though it is unpopular both with tourist and ranchers, and often kill weaker, though intelligent animals in very cruel ways.

Also in the Ocean this is found to be true. And the vicious killers of the deep blue are denegated by a large swathe of the population. This is wrong, because even if they are natural born killers and kill intelligent and feeling popular mammals of the deep, they are more important than the species they are killing for food. Thus I believe the apex predator in this case - the Japanese whaling and fishing fleets - should be regulated to more mimic the activities of more conventional apex predators such as Great Whites and killer whales, and not be vilified for choosing to kill whales in certain circumstances. Whales are like giant Elk of the deep, and uncontrolled populations may devastate populations of lower species - especially if shark hunting continues uncontrolled!

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