

## Down at the summit

by Daniel Pauly

### WORLD OCEANS SUMMIT

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Capella, Singapore



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*The Economist* hosted a huge "World Ocean Summit" in Singapore earlier this year, designed to find solutions to the ills that beset our oceans. And more precisely, to identify remedies that entrepreneurs could find ways to invest and profit from. It sounded like a reasonable goal, because we tend to live in democratic countries with market economies shaped by private enterprise, so I accepted their invitation.

The head of the World Bank attended, as well as ministers from various countries, CEOs of big fishing companies, heads of international environmental NGOs, hedge fund managers, scientists... It should have worked, but it didn't really, despite the beautiful resort where the event took place and the flawless organization. I think it was because –

mostly subtly, sometimes not so subtly – our very determined hosts, from the Editor-in-Chief to the lowliest of *The Economist* staffers, were pushing for "market solutions," insisting that the remedies we identified had to make money for hedge fund managers and other investors. It sounded all right at first – but how would this work if a health care system, for example, was designed this way? Wouldn't it leave too many people untreated, because no money can be made off them? Also, are fisheries not a gigantic example of a

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“market failure,” as economists call the mess we are in? (Although it is a small mess compared with that of our banking system.)

But there was no space at the summit to discuss any of these things, and the complementary roles of governments and civil society. Everything that moves had to be turned into a commodity, and even some things that don't move, like marine protected areas, which were identified as one of the places for profitable investments. Thus my disappointment and perhaps that of Fisheries Centre Director Dr Rashid Sumaila too, who also attended.

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I did have the opportunity to address one of the summit's working groups where I mentioned that the invitation of *The Economist*, besides being a compliment, also was a challenge, because I am often accused of spreading gloom and doom, in spite of being neither gloomy nor doomy. The point is that a doctor – and I am one, if not of medicine – must correctly diagnose the disease at hand before being able to propose solutions leading back to health.

The disease of industrial fisheries, I suggested, is “expansionitis” and it is caused largely by demand for fish in rich countries. Indeed, industrial fisheries have gone so far that we're expanding into the world's oceans at a rate of 1 million km<sup>2</sup> and southward by 0.8° of latitude per year. Expansionitis is feeding essentially insatiable markets in Europe, North America and Northeast Asia, from finite fishing grounds

in Africa, Latin America and Tropical Asia. Japan and the US import 60% to 70% of their food, the EU 70% to 80%. Industrial fishing is not about feeding the world's poor.

Then, because we were supposed to emphasize remedies, I listed those remedies for expansionitis about which there is widespread agreement:

- Reduce and eventually abolish subsidies to fisheries – they are what feeds expansionitis;
- Rebuild fish stocks in developed countries, so that they need not grab so much of the developing countries' fish, and export the lessons learned to the developing world;
- Allow developing countries to catch and process their own fish, and export a part of the value-added products to the developed world;
- Create arrangements providing exclusive access (to coastal resources in both developing and developed countries) to small-scale fisheries, which catch far more than industrial fisheries and could catch even more if not exposed to competition from industrial vessels;
- Reduce and eventually ban discards (Norway does it) and consume small fish directly, rather than turning them into fishmeal. There is a huge reserve there.

But let's face it: these remedies (all “market solutions,” incidentally) if implemented, would be the result of mostly public policy, which then would benefit the fishing industry in the long-term. In the short term, however, these remedies will be fought against tooth and nail by our friends from the private sector, that is those *The Economist* wants us not only to work with (which is a good thing), but to put in the driver's seat. These are the reasons why I felt down at the Ocean Summit.



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The *Sea Around Us* Project website can be accessed at [www.seaaroundus.org](http://www.seaaroundus.org) and contains up-to-date information on the Project.



The *Sea Around Us* Project is a scientific collaboration between the University of British Columbia and the Pew Environmental Group that began in July 1999. The Pew Environmental Group works around the world to establish pragmatic, science-based policies that protect our oceans, wild lands and climate. Pew also sponsors scientific research that sheds new light on the dimensions of and solutions to the problems facing the global marine environment.

# The Pacific Rim Whale Festival

By Aylin Ulman and Claire Hornby



Aylin Ulman (right) stands with her mother (centre) and Wendy Hainstock, coordinator of the Pacific Rim Whale Festival. (Photo: Claire Hornby)

Tofino's Pacific Rim Whale Festival celebrates whales and their intimate connection with the ocean. This year, the festival's 26th, featured presentations at locations scattered around the Pacific Rim National Park both in Tofino and Ucluelet. A variety of other events also took place, such as educational beach walks, whale watching, art shows, barbecues and live local music.

I, Aylin Ulman, gave a presentation I had wanted to put together for some time called "The top 40 most interesting marine creatures." From my experiences teaching scuba diving, working as a naturalist for a whale-watching company and being part of the education team for the Vancouver Aquarium, I have learned countless fascinating

animal facts. I love educating people about some of the world's most amazing creatures, and hopefully, encouraging them to help take care of the marine realm by strengthening their sense of wonder about it.

Some of my favourite animals from the talk include the peacock mantis shrimp, which has the most highly developed eyes on the planet and also one of the fastest strikes in the world – it's said to rival a .22-calibre speeding bullet! I also included the

pelagic, neutrally buoyant and elusive argonaut with its paper-thin shell; the toxic striped pyjama squid that appears to be wearing a Yankees baseball uniform; and the ocean's supreme ambush predator, the hairy frogfish. A few of my other favourites include the sawfish that uses its chainsaw-like snout to cut through prey; the alien-looking hooded nudibranch that somehow smells of fresh watermelon after it's been handled; sea otters and their power to transform their ecological niche; and the giant Pacific octopus with its amazing skin, eyes and surprising intelligence.

To finish off, I chose the killer whale, because it is the ultimate apex predator in our ocean. I went on to describe the three different killer whale ecotypes

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**Totem2mer.com**

## It costs nothing to be polite

Being consistently friendly is the best policy, as this design from Bertrand Gaumer of the website [Totem 2 Mer](http://Totem2Mer.com) shows.

Totem 2 Mer is an online space that divers use to express their opinions and inform the public about the exploitation of marine resources along the French coast. Bertrand contacted Dr Daniel Pauly to ask for advice, but Daniel – in a friendly reply – explained that he was unable to assist with the particular request. Despite his potentially disappointing response, Daniel was kindly presented with this personalized Totem 2 Mer design as a sign of gratitude.

How fitting!



we have living off of our coast, and how they have each adapted to consuming different types of prey.

On the last day of the festival, there was a “Sea Change” panel discussion, which involved four panelists who were asked to discuss how the changing oceans have affected human culture in their communities, and altered their careers in the process. The panelists were Wendy Szanislo, a marine mammal biologist, Leah Thorpe of the Cetus Research and Conservation Society, Dave Hurwitz of the Ucluelet Aquarium and the *Sea Around Us* Project’s very own Daniel Pauly.

Each panelist had five minutes to freely discuss their work and how it has changed over time as a result of climate change, overfishing, and the improved knowledge of the general public and their transformed perspective of the ocean as compared to 30 years ago. Wendy Szanislo discussed how her work as a marine mammal biologist changed as the public came to learn about marine animals. Although people used to know very little about local marine mammals – removing them from the wild to put into aquariums for entertainment – they have come to realise that whales are not “killers” and that it’s important to protect these intelligent species. Both Wendy and Leah Thorpe discussed the changes they have seen in BC’s growing eco-tourism sector and how this has shaped the work they do.

Dave Hurwitz told an interesting story of his life as a commercial fisherman and the changes he has seen in the community of Tofino. Once an important fishing village, Tofino transformed into a tourist destination as most commercial fish stocks in the area declined and many fishermen, Dave’s friends, lost their livelihoods. His respect and passion for the ocean has now propelled him into a position of activism in his community – eating locally, living sustainably off the ocean, and hoping for a future without fish farms and oil tankers in his “backyard.”

Finally Daniel spoke of changing oceans at the global level, particularly with respect to commercial fleets expanding from utilizing near-shore waters



Three surfers head out into Tofino’s breakers. (Photo: Claire Hornby)

to harvesting on the high seas. He discussed how our actions as consumers are intimately linked to the future of important wild fish stocks, such as salmon and herring.

Once each panel member had spoken, the public was allowed to present questions and comments. This turned into an engaging and inspiring opportunity for people to discuss their fears of future aquaculture projects, concerns over sustainable seafood choices, changes to policy and management from the provincial to the federal level, proposed oil pipelines, and the ways that we can start encouraging more stewardship and education in our own communities.

It was a treasure to see how everyone in Tofino is so connected to nature, and seeks ways to prevent negative impacts on the environment. One great example of this is the new Ucluelet aquarium, which is set to open this spring. It will only “borrow” its marine animals from the sea for short periods of time before they can return to the freedom of the ocean. What a fantastic concept! If only we all were as connected to the natural world as the Tofino-ites.

The Pacific Rim Whale Festival has historically been dominated by the topic of whales and other marine mammals, but this year there was a prominent shift to include fisheries. Daniel’s profound knowledge and expertise in this area added a necessary element to the 2012 festival. It seems as if people are beginning to understand that whales rely on fish, we rely on fish, and that if we continue to freely purge the ocean of its resources, nothing will be left for us, or for the whales.



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