

Marine Mammals Committee

Committee Members: R. L. Brownell, Jr., C. M. Callahan, K. Dudzinski, J. P. Dines (Chair), H. H. Edwards, J. Lapsertis, T. J. McIntyre, D. K. Odell, T. J. O'Shea, C. W. Potter, and S. Sheffield.

Mission:

The marine mammals committee was formed in 1921 and Chaired by E. W. Nelson. It is the longest-standing active committee of the American Society of Mammalogists. Its mission is to maintain and encourage interest in marine mammals in the ASM, to provide the Society membership with information about marine mammalogy, including conservation and legislative issues, to spearhead resolutions and legislation involving marine mammals, and to serve as a liaison between ASM and the Society for Marine Mammalogy (SMM). Members of the Marine Mammals Committee are frequently active in both ASM and SMM.

Information Items:

(1) Members of the Committee have monitored and communicated with each other over the course of the year on issues pertinent to the conservation of marine mammals.

(2) Japanese Whaling

At the 81st Annual Meeting in 2001, the American Society of Mammalogists adopted a resolution stipulating that Japan's research whaling program provides no major advances in scientific understanding of whales and called on Japan to cease said scientific whaling. On 31 March 2014, the International Court of Justice issued a decision on Japan's whaling program in Antarctica. Japan has been making use of the scientific permit exception to continue whaling since the moratorium on commercial whaling under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling. The Court concluded that Japan's activities were not legitimate "scientific research," as claimed, but was actually impermissible commercial whaling.

(3) Panel Discussion on Captive and Free-living Killer Whales

The Society for Marine Mammalogy held a panel discussion entitled "Scientific Studies of Captive and Free-living Killer Whales" on 12 December 2013 in Dunedin, New Zealand during the Society's 20th Biennial Conference. More information is available on the website of the Society for Marine Mammalogy: <http://www.marinemammalscience.org>.

(4) Proposed California Legislation to Ban Killer Whales in Captivity

California Assembly Bill 2148, introduced in early 2014, proposes to make it unlawful to hold in captivity, or use, a wild-caught or captive-bred orca for performance or entertainment purposes within the State of California. The bill has since been placed on hold for further study and won't likely be addressed until 2015. The text of the proposed law can be found at:

http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB2140

(5) Marine Mammal Anatomy and Pathology Library

Developed as an online training and reference tool, the Marine Mammal Anatomy and Pathology Library (MMAPL - www.mmapl.ucsc.edu) is a collaborative effort to construct a visual library of normal anatomy and common pathologies encountered in marine mammals. In addition to high quality annotated images of Otariid (California sea lion) and Cetacean (harbor porpoise) anatomical structures, the website includes sections on basic stranding response, safety precautions, and post-mortem examination of marine mammals. More taxa will be added to the library in the future.

(6) Beaked Whale Strandings in Southern Greece

Five Cuvier's beaked whales (*Ziphius cavirostris*) were stranded near Southern Crete, Greece on 1–6 April 2014, apparently in association with NATO naval exercises occurring at the same time and place. The US Navy was a participant in the NATO exercises and low frequency active sonar was likely deployed. At least two of the stranded beaked whales died. The Marine Mammal Committee monitored the stranding event and considered drafting a letter on behalf of the Society asking the Secretary of the US Navy to clarify if the US Navy's Marine Mammal Mitigation Program applies to training operations that include the US Navy but occur outside of US territory. The Committee subsequently learned that the US Navy's mitigation measures were in effect at the time of the beaked whale strandings. The committee continued to monitor the stranding event but no action was taken.

Action Items: None.

Respectfully submitted,

James P. Dines

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