
Clapham and colleagues state that Japan’s research program in the North Pacific “presumes, on an almost a priori basis, that whales (not humans) are primarily responsible for worldwide declines in fish stocks.” To the contrary, the overall aim of JARPN II is to contribute to the development of an ecological management approach. Clapham and colleagues ignore the fact that the International Whaling Commission (IWC) unanimously adopted a resolution making the study of interactions between whales and fisheries a matter of priority and that the FAO’s Committee on Fisheries and the Johannesburg Plan adopted at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development have urged the development and implementation of ecosystem approaches to fisheries management.

Other statements made by Clapham and colleagues accuse Japan of being “obstructive.” There is more than a little irony in the fact that these scientists criticize the research and its methods and data at the same time they seek to deny Japanese scientists the normal first right of data publication.

Orians and colleagues claim that the research “results in the needless deaths of hundreds of whales each year, despite a global moratorium to which Japan is legally bound.” This and other statements of theirs appear to be political advocacy rather than science.

Holt omits the critical point that much of the rationale for support of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) moratorium was related to the uncertainty of the science and management of whale stocks. Research was initiated in response to the rationale for the moratorium. The ICRW, which was adopted in 1946 and which established the IWC, has as its objective to provide for the conservation of whales for the benefit of the whaling industry and its consumers. Notwithstanding this, the now institutionalized discourse within the IWC reflects a strong difference of views between members who wish to sustainably utilize abundant species of whales for food and those who wish to protect all whales. Rather than adopting regulations to ensure that whaling is sustainable, regulations adopted since 1982, namely the moratorium on commercial whaling and the sanctuary in the Antarctic, are counter to the purpose of the ICRW and without scientific foundation.

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Japan’s Proper Whaling Research