

The Dolphin Drive Hunt: Appropriate Management?

Observations from the Emergency Extension of the Hunting season of
the Dolphin Drive Hunt in Taiji



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Elsa Nature Conservancy (ENC)

The Elsa Nature Conservancy was established in 1976 with the aim of global nature and environmental protection across a broad spectrum, from one's own doorstep to the sky. Elsa always looks for the blind spots of the conservation movement -- things others have forgotten about -- and has campaigned for the protection of animals that are going extinct unnoticed, such as the Japanese reed bunting (*Embriza yessoensis*). Furthermore, the organization was campaigning for dolphin and elephant protection before the media took up these issues. It has also continued the debate in opposition to vivisection, as well as criticism of safari parks, zoos, and aquariums. Additionally, Elsa has from the very beginning used recycled paper for its publications, and makes its own stationery and note-pads out of paper with only side used, and from computer printing scraps, in order to save as many trees as possible. Elsa's basic approach is "Each person practices nature/environment protection in whatever way is personally possible." While the organization sets forth grand ideals, individual members carry out their own modest but diligent activities. Elsa Nature Conservancy: Box2, Tsukuba Gakuen Post Office, Tsukuba 305-8691, Japan
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1) Background

1-1) The dolphin drive hunt season

Dolphin drive hunts currently occur in 2 prefectures in Japan (Wakayama and Shizuoka) through permits granted from the prefectural authorities. Specifically, the towns of Taiji in Wakayama and Futo in Shizuoka are permitted to engage in dolphin drive hunts, but the hunts have not actually occurred in Futo since 2005. Effectively, the only place where dolphin drive hunts continue is in Taiji. There, the season runs from September 1 to the end of March in the following year, but for the hunting of “gondou,” ---pilot whales(although called ‘whale,’ a type of dolphin), Rissor’s dolphins(“hanagondou” in Japanese), and False killer whales--- the season is one month longer, continuing to the end of April.

Most of the dolphins captured in the drive hunts are used for food; but recently more than 100 individuals per year are sold to aquariums around the world. The dolphin drive hunts have sporadically been under critical scrutiny of the international press since the 1970s because of their cruelty; and they have become a focus worldwide attention and controversy since their brutal depiction in the Oscar-winning documentary, “The Cove”. The film uncovered not only the cruelty of the dolphin drive hunt method, but the high levels of mercury and other toxins to which people consuming the meat are exposed. Since the film’s release, numerous pro-cetacean activists have descended on the tiny town of Taiji, creating disturbances for the local governmental officials and especially the fishermen, who claim that dolphin hunting as a cultural legacy, but also bringing additional international attention to the controversy of the dolphin drive hunts.

2) The 2010 – 2011 Drive Dolphin Hunts

This year (2011), Taiji suspended the dolphin drives on February 26, without announcing official reasons for the suspension. The announcement did indicate that short finned pilot whales were not being seen in waters where they could be hunted; and this is likely true.

2-1) Fresh dolphin meat available in markets despite suspension of dolphin drive hunts

In April, ELSA received reports that large quantities of fresh dolphin meat being sold in the area surrounding Taiji. As drive hunting had been suspended, the source of the meat may have been from harpoon hunting; however, if drive hunting of dolphins except for goudou (pilot whales, for example) were occurring in April, this would be a violation of regulations. So we procured a sample of this meat, which was labeled “Iruka (dolphin) harabo (belly)”. However, the color of the skin was not consistent with pilot whale skin. When personnel at the shop were questioned about the source of the meat, they replied it was the “same as the dolphins in the aquarium,” but could not tell us the exact species. We had several samples of fresh dolphin meat test at a laboratory licensed by our government.(See table 1)

ELSA has previously appealed to local and national government officials to put a warning label indicating that “Dolphin meat contains mercury and other toxic chemicals and may harm health” on each package sold in the markets. Furthermore, our studies suggest that the extent of contamination by toxic chemicals differs amongst different species of dolphins, so that indicating the specific species of dolphins could be important in protecting the consumer.

2-2) Sudden resumption of dolphin drive hunting

ELSA received a report that dolphin drive hunts had occurred in Taiji on May 4 and 5, despite the season having ended. We also received inquiries from abroad questioning the legality of drive hunts occurring in May. After compiling all the information we had received, ELSA approached the Japan Fisheries Agency and the Department of Fisheries and Resources Management in Wakayama. Below follows the problems we have uncovered through our inquiry.

3) Problems Uncovered through Elsa’s investigation – Critical Deficiencies in the Quota System regulating Dolphin Drive Hunts

3-1) Reasons for the extension of the dolphin drive hunting season

1) No catches of short finned pilot whales and false killer whales:

During the most recent season (September 2010 – April 2011) the quota for short finned pilot whales was 207; but none (zero) of this species were caught. In the previous season, the quota was 230 and 170 individuals were captured and killed. In both seasons, the quota for false killer whales was 70, but no individuals (zero) were caught in either season. No individuals were caught because these species did not enter into waters close enough to shore for drive hunting. Complaints have been made that “Sea Shepherd and other anti-whaling groups interfered.” However, it is unlikely that the activities of such groups could have interfered only with the catch of specific dolphin species, as the numbers of other species that were caught this season is in line with previous seasons (See table 2).

2) The fishing ground off Taiji became temporarily unoccupied.

Although Taiji has 2 whaling vessels for small cetaceans, they have been assigned to research whaling off the coast of Kushiro so that, the fishing ground for coastal whaling near Taiji became unoccupied, and available to use for the drive hunt without being competitive with coastal whaling. Also harpoon whalers and fishermen for stationary fishing agreed to allow the use of the emptied fishing area for the drive hunt of dolphins. Therefore, Wakayama prefecture gave a permit to extend the drive hunt season on May 2, extending the hunting season from May 2 through May 31 of 2011, specifically to fill the quotas for short finned pilot whales (207) and false killer whales (70).

According to the Wakayama prefectural Department of Fishery and Resource Management (WDFRM), the catch quotas for all species are determined by the Japan Fisheries Agency, but the hunting season is determined locally. Therefore, the extension of

the season into May did not represent any infraction of prefectural regulations. However, discussions with the Japan Fisheries Agency and the WDFRM did reveal the following problems:

3-2) What is the effect of a flexible hunting season schedule on the wild dolphin population?

According to the Department of Fishery and Resource Management, the prefectural departments have little, if any, independent information regarding the actual situation in the local fisheries. Therefore, if "Isana Union" (local fishermen's/whalers' union) applies for a permit after it arranged and planned fishing activities, getting agreement from other fishermen, the WDFRM issues the permit. Although the WDFRM states that "Local fishermen do not make independent decisions," effectively, fishermen of "Isana Union" are in control, because they provide the information and determine parameters such as season duration for catching specific species. In practice, the local "Isana Union" effectively sets its own rules; and the WDFRM concedes that that is not unusual. According to the WDFRM, the expansion of the fishing season is not also unusual in the field of general fisheries.

In theory, it should be difficult to prolong the dolphin hunting season because of the need to balance the catch seasons for dolphin hunting and other fishing. But leaving the decisions open to change at the local level facilitates having flexible seasons. This means that, in practice, dolphin drive hunting could continue throughout the year, as long as quotas were not exceeded. Clearly these practices set the timing and duration of hunting seasons to manage competition between fishermen, with no regard for possible effects on dolphin populations. It is possible – even likely – that if migration patterns of the dolphins change, or the numbers of migrating dolphins decreases – that the dolphin hunting season would simply be prolonged in response, threatening the population of dolphins further.

3-3) The fishermen who hunt dolphins file reports on their catch, but independent verification is lacking.

Hunting violations occurred in Futo of Shizuoka prefecture in 1996. Dolphins were being captured beyond established quotas, and under-reporting of the numbers of dolphins caught was also documented. The observation, documentation and reporting of the captures by animal welfare and environmental groups led to the release of 6 false killer whales. (See "A Report on the 1996 Dolphin Catch-Quota Violation & the Issues It Raised and Report on Protest Actions " published by Institute for Environmental Science and Culture and Elsa Nature Conservancy, 1997)

The problem raised at this time was the lack of independent oversight over dolphin drive hunting. The Shizuoka prefectural Fisheries Division was unaware of the quota violations, having depended solely on the reports of the local fishing cooperative. Not only was the Division unaware of the violation, they did not bother to confirm the reports of the animal welfare and environmental activists. Instead, the Division continued to support the report of the local fishermen's union stating that, "To survey the fisheries under our purview would be an indication of distrust towards them." In Futo, then, violations continued following the 1996 incident. According to the local fishermen, "Reports of the number of dolphins captured cannot be believed." Additionally, they have said, "If a wallet is

floating around in the ocean, it would be ridiculous not to take it.” In other words, from the point of view of the fishermen, dolphins are merely a potential source of income.

The Taiji dolphin drive hunts are conducted in secret. Two investigators are supposedly in place for a maximum of 4.5 months; but even that only amounts to half the duration of the official hunting season. Furthermore, the data regarding the number and species of dolphins caught in the hunts comes only from the fishermen themselves. In other words, no independent oversight of the dolphin hunts is in place.

Considering the example of Futo, it would not be unexpected to find violations in the kind of uncontrolled situation in Taiji. For things to progress in an appropriate and legal manner, independent oversight is absolutely necessary, but currently lacking. Only in this way can trust be garnered and errors avoided. For the Taiji dolphin drive hunt that has created such an international sense of distrust, independent oversight by an objective third party with no stake in the dolphin hunt is clearly a necessity.

3-4) Local conditions affect catch quotas

Dolphin hunting in Japan includes “drive hunting” and “harpoon hunting,” the latter of which includes “cross bow hunting”. The Japan Fisheries Agency determines the catch quotas for specific species for each type of hunting. The quotas vary between regions, and are based on catches from previous years. That the quota for striped dolphins in Futo still 40 when none have been caught in 10 years raises serious questions about this practice. (See table 3)

In 1996, when false killer whales, which were not included in the quota for Futo, were taken, the Fisheries Agency attempted to “correct” the situation by decreasing the catch quota for Taiji, raising serious concerns. At that time, however, the attempted transfer of quotas from Futo to Taiji was not carried out, and in fact, prevented by the protests and demands of animal welfare and environmental groups.

In 2008 the official quota announced by the Fisheries Agency for striped dolphins by dolphin drive hunting in Taiji was 450 dolphins. However, the actual number of striped dolphins caught in Taiji in 2008 was 510 dolphins. Clearly, 60 striped dolphins had been taken in excess of the quota; and some Taiji residents raised concerns.

In 2009, the Fisheries Agency suddenly changed the quotas for striped dolphins announcing that “Unfulfilled quotas assigned to Chiba and Shizuoka prefectures in the 2008 – 2009 season will be transferred to Wakayama and Okinawa prefectures.” As previously mentioned, the quota violation occurred in 2008. In other words, adjustments were made to the quotas after infractions had occurred. The quota for striped dolphins in Taiji was changed to 531 dolphins so that in the end, no violation could be documented.

We contacted the Fisheries Agency regarding this incident. They explained that the adjustments had been made between prefectures prior to the announcement of the quotas. They stated that these actions were completely legal, as prefectures such as Shizuoka or Chiba are allowed to decide how to use their quotas as they wish.

However, the transfer of catch quotas after catch violations had already occurred indicates a clear absence of “appropriate management of catch quotas” and is an appropriate target for protest. Yet, it could also be argued that “for overall resources, if transfers are made within an annual catch quota, they cannot be considered illegal.” Also for “improper management of catch quotas” there is apparently no specific penalty.

The Futo branch of the Ito Fishing Cooperative of Shizuoka prefecture makes a declaration of implementation of dolphin drive hunting, and if it is to be believed, transfer of catch quotas are not considered. In this case, as opposed to the situation in 1996, it would not be unlikely for Futo to transfer catch quotas to Taiji. For Futo, which has not caught a single striped dolphin since 2000, such a transfer would represent no loss.

3-5) Quota violations are difficult to identify

The Fisheries Agency aggregates are based on the calendar year (from January to December of a given year) thus include the second part (January to April) of one dolphin hunting season and the first part (September to December) of the next. Quotas, on the other hand, are set for a given season, from September of one year to April of the following year. Because of this discrepancy, there are also sometimes differences in the numbers reported for the annual catch by local fishery (Taiji) versus the Japan Fisheries Agency. In 2008, the catch reported by the Fisheries Agency was 535, exceeding the quota of 531. However, whether this discrepancy is a true violation or due to the differences in counting (calendar year versus season) is difficult to discern.

In addition, data regarding the numbers and species/type of dolphins caught is reported by the fishing cooperative or the fishermen themselves. The Fisheries Agency states that although unannounced on-the-spot inspections of fishery operations are sometimes made, that monitoring by the prefectural or national inspectors is not possible. But unless inspections can be made of the closed operations of the fishermen, violations could not be expected to be uncovered, even if they occurred.

3-6) What is the purpose of catch quotas?

The Fisheries Agency began imposing catch quotas specifying the number and species/types of dolphins that could be caught in 1993. Until then, there was no limitation on the number or species of dolphins that could be taken. In imposing these quotas, many in Japan believed the government was protecting dolphins. However, the recent extension of the catch season indicates that the regulations exist not to sustain dolphins, but the dolphin hunt. The Fisheries Agency states that, “the quotas are not for the purpose of protecting dolphins, but to support sustainable use and consumption of dolphins.” No wonder that extensions of catch seasons and transfer of catch quotas are possible, and that the “poor management of catch quotas” carries no penalty. Most of all, the quotas appear to act more as a guarantee of the number of dolphins that can be caught, rather than a limit. [Then, are catch quotas appropriately set?](#)

3-7) Are catch quotas appropriate? Effects of the catch quota transfers on striped dolphin hunting.

Following much criticism the original quotas of 1993 were amended 14 years later in 2007; and since then, quotas have regularly decreased. We asked the Fisheries Agency about this and received the following response:

According to the Fisheries Agency, “the reason is that the captures have exceeded the number consistent with sustainable use/consumption of dolphins; but quotas could not be suddenly be decreased because of concerns about untoward effects on the fishermen’s livelihoods.” In other words, the Fisheries Agency admits that current quotas are not consistent with sustainable hunting of dolphins.

In this context, the transfer of quotas from areas where dolphins are not available, to regions where they can be caught could not be said to be “appropriate management of catch quotas.” For striped dolphins practices such as these can be particularly dangerous. In Futo, the dolphin fishery was already unstable in the 1960s when 10 – 20 thousand striped dolphins were taken each year. By the 1970s, less than 5,000 dolphins could be caught in many years. During the 1980s, the numbers dropped to 2000 or in hundreds dolphins per year. In the 1990s, dolphins were caught only in tens in most years, and appeared years of zero catch. Since 2000 not a single striped dolphin has been caught. (See table 3)

“Basic Information on Japan’s Rare Aquatic Wildlife” (Fisheries Agency, 1993) contains this passage about the striped dolphin: “It is reasonable to assume that the local coastal population [of striped dolphins] upon which Japan’s drives have been dependent have sharply declined.....Current [1993] stocks are in all likelihood less than one-tenth 1950 levels”(p.622). Despite these circumstances, the Fisheries Agency has failed to modify catch quotas, allowing fishermen to take dolphins without appropriate oversight, leading to the complete eradication of the striped dolphin migration in Futo.

Taiji began hunting striped dolphins in 1974; and “catches declined immediately”. (Toshio Kasuya "Thoughts regarding the decline of striped dolphin fishing," Sphere, Spring 1999, Volume 8, p23) The quota for striped dolphins in Taiji is 450 and has not changed since 1993. So Taiji is continuing to take numbers of dolphins that the Fisheries Agency has acknowledged “exceeds the numbers consistent with sustainable use”. In 2008, 510 striped dolphins were caught, with number decreasing slightly since then. In Futo, there was a temporary increase in catch number before the precipitous decline. It may be that the increased hunting finally resulted in the eventual eradication of striped dolphins from Futo. For Taiji not to follow the example of Futo will require extreme vigilance.

4) Japanese Government Policies Protect neither Dolphins nor the Japanese People

4-1) Dolphin Crisis in Japanese Waters

In this hunting season (the fiscal year of 2010) no short finned pilot whales were captured in Taiji. According to the Fisheries Agency, dolphins, unlike other fisheries “are

not in bad condition” as a resource. Yet, if dolphins do not come near shore, drive hunting cannot be conducted.

When the striped dolphin catch declined, a researcher suggested that the reason may be that striped dolphins were no longer coming close to shore. Currently, in Futo it is said that drive hunting is no longer possible because the migration route of the striped dolphins has changed and they no longer come near to shore. There may be other reasons; but since 2005, drive hunting has not been conducted in Futo. It has been suggested that the reason no short finned pilot whales have been captured in Taiji this year (2010) is due to a change in the migration route of the short finned pilot whales farther away from shore.

Is it possible that numbers of short finned pilot whales and striped dolphins have simply declined in the coastal waters around Japan? In "Thoughts about the decline of striped dolphin fishing" (Sphere, Spring 1999, Volume 8, p22) Toshio Kasuya writes, "Whales have low reproductive rates so population recovery takes a long time. At an estimated 4% rate of reproduction, it would take 18 years for the population (resource) to double. If the rate were 2%, it would take 35 years. Without knowing interactive contacts of individuals in the different area of sea around Japan, it is practically impossible to determine what the sustainable harvest would be."

It is said that the long history of drive hunting of striped dolphins has contributed to the advancement of research about the species. Yet it is still said that, "It is unknown whether the striped dolphins are taken from a large or small offshore population." ("Encyclopedia of whales and dolphins" p.147 Heibonsha 1993) Under such circumstances, if quotas are set too high to support the sustainable use, expansion of the hunting season or transfer of quotas for only the interest of the fishermen would not be expected to be allowed. In recent years, the dolphins' environment has been subject to adverse effects of human activity including climate change, increased boat and other marine traffic, and toxic marine pollution. The high concentration of marine pollutants in dolphins has led to adverse health effects in dolphins. Some even consider their meat to be "toxic waste". As apex predators, dolphins in the waters around Japan may also accumulate radiation due to the recent tsunami and ensuing nuclear power plant melt downs.

4-2) Toxic Chemicals in Short Finned Pilot Whales

The meat of short finned pilot whales whose hunt season has been extended this year, is highly contaminated with mercury, methyl mercury and PCBs.

Research conducted by ELSA shows that the meat of dolphins from the drive hunts contains levels of contaminants far above the limits established by the Japanese government. Particularly high levels of contaminants were found in the meat of short finned pilot whales, Risso's dolphins and bottlenose dolphins. The mayor of Taiji has complained of "damage to the reputation of the town based only on rumor," however, these are scientific facts. ELSA assayed several samples of meat from dolphins captured in the drive hunts in April of this year (2011) and all were heavily contaminated. For example, a package recommended to us by a store clerk as particularly delicious contained 19.2 times the allowable limit of PCBs (see table 1). PCBs are known to cause liver disorders, visual disorders, immune deficiency and are likely to cause cancer if

ingested by young children in whom decreased learning ability, decreased thyroid function and failure to thrive (especially in male children) are documented risks. Because the drive hunt was extended, meat that would not otherwise have been shipped out of Taiji has been distributed outside the region endangering the health of people well outside of the village who may have consumed dolphin meat. According to the Wakayama prefectural Department of Fishery and Resources Management, 68 pilot whales were slaughtered for meat and 6 pilot whales were captured alive for aquariums during extended period (May 2 through May 31).

Continuation of the drive hunts is harmful to the dolphins and to the humans who eat their meat. In Taiji, there are people who say that eating dolphins is part of the food culture, which must be protected. Yet, only 8.5% of the population of Taiji is employed in the fisheries and only about 100 people at the most benefit from whaling, including dolphin hunting ("Mikumano Seikei Juku" blog May 24, 2011). Based on 2007 data, there are 13 drive hunting boats (2 fishermen per boat) and 29 harpoon hunting boats (1 fisherman per boat). Since then, I have been told that numbers have decreased, meaning that there are very few fishermen benefitting from the dolphin hunts. Furthermore, many people in Taiji do not eat dolphin meat. In Japan generally, whale meat comprises only 0.5% of all animal meat (such as beef, pork and chicken) that is consumed, and even that is declining annually. In other words, the consumption of dolphin meat is extremely limited to specific populations in specific regions. Nationally, it is highly doubtful that eating dolphin meat is a food culture requiring preservation and protection. Furthermore, there cannot be food culture without first having food safety.

Wakayama prefecture, Taiji and the Fisheries Agency should warn people about the dangers of consuming dolphin meat before health problems occur.

4-3) Dolphin Drive Hunting is Outdated

The dolphin drive hunt, which the Japanese government has promoted as a national policy regards dolphins only as a marine resource. Yet internationally, dolphins (and other cetaceans) are increasingly recognized as non-human persons and/or are considered beings worthy of special protection. Initiatives such as these to protect wild dolphins were the focus of the International Year of the Dolphin, set by the United Nations, in 2007 and 2008, although this was not widely known or discussed in Japan.

Currently, the dolphin drive hunts are conducted primarily to capture dolphins as a food, but also to take live dolphins for the aquarium trade. However, dolphin meat has been proven scientifically to contain toxic levels of mercury, methyl mercury and PCBs that pose significant risks to human health. Furthermore, as understanding about the dolphins' ecology has grown, it has become apparent that keeping wide-ranging dolphins in small tanks is cruel. Internationally, the morality of exploiting wildlife such as wild dolphins for human profit has increasingly come under public criticism. Globally, movements to protect animals from human abuse and exploitation and approve laws ensuring animal rights are growing and receiving increased support. These views, increasingly embraced by the international community, are the basis for the position of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) that dolphins should not be taken from the drive hunts for aquariums. The capture and sales of wild dolphins is becoming increasingly restricted internationally

so that aquariums are focusing more and more on captive breeding programs. Amidst all these issues, Taiji has become a major international source of dolphins for the aquarium trade. In this context, it is no surprise that Japan has received much international criticism.

Everyone who has witnessed the dolphin drive hunts describes them as “the most brutal thing ever seen”. The methods used to drive and kill dolphins utterly ignore the well being of the dolphins, causing them obvious pain and agony in the process. Internationally, in the 21st century, the brutal exploitation of animals is **not** accepted as a social norm, regardless of whether the animals are domesticated or wild. It is often asked, “Why can we not eat dolphin meat, when it is OK to eat beef?” but this is not the issue. The issue centers on the ethics of how humans treat all the other animals with whom we share this planet.

5) Conclusion

The Japanese government continues to embrace a national policy that permits the capture/killing of wild animals protected by international law, making our country’s practices out of step with the times and with the rest of the world. They have failed to give local communities appropriate guidance that helps them to keep up to the time. They have also failed to engage those of us within Japan speaking out against the drive hunts, contending that we are overly emotional anti-whaling or animal protection activists. Furthermore, they have provided financial assistance to the building of facilities for the purpose of concealing the drive hunt, attempting to establish Taiji as a “Whale (and dolphin) Town” despite full knowledge of the brutal reality of the drive hunts there. In response, many citizens of Taiji have protested saying, “We want the government to keep in mind that many citizens of Taiji do not benefit from whaling.” (“Taiji People’s Report” 1993); and “Most people in Taiji do not make their living from whaling. The number of people in Taiji who have nothing to do with whaling is greater than the number of people who are involved.” (May 24, 2011 “Mikumano Seokei Juku” blog).

Those who want to continue the dolphin drive hunt have attempted to connect the drive hunts to whaling saying, “There is a 400 year history of whaling in Taiji,” and claiming that whaling is critical to the cultural legacy of Taiji. In fact, the history of dolphin hunting in Taiji is short. According to “The History of Taiji” the first recorded dolphin drive was in 1933, with subsequent hunts occurring in 1936 and 1944. It was not until 1969 that dolphin drives have been conducted on a large scale. The history of the dolphin drives spans not 400 years, but a mere 42. Furthermore, in 1969, the main goal of the dolphin drive was to capture pilot whales as prized showpieces for the Taiji Whale Museum. In other words, the dolphin drive was purely for profit, having little to do with cultural history. Furthermore, the 400 year history of whaling in Taiji has not been continuous, and temporarily ceased in 1878. In an incident now called “seminagare” most of the Taiji whaling vessels were lost in a great storm when they took a baby Right whale and its mother in tow against a cultural taboo of taking a mother and baby whale. (“History of Taiji,” and Blog of the Taiji town hall). Whaling did not resume in Taiji after that until 1905 when modern whaling techniques from Norway were introduced.

The reference to ‘cultural history’ or tradition as a rationale for continuing the dolphin drive hunt is meaningless considering the actual events that have occurred in Taiji.

Furthermore, even culture and long history are not acceptable reasons to inflict pain and agony on wild animals. Around the world there are examples – such as Albany, Australia – where humans and whales now co-exist peacefully, despite historical events and practices of exploitation. Traditions and cultures vary between countries, of course. That does not mean that social norms cannot or should not change within Japan. In order to be in step with the rest of the modern, civilized world, the Japanese government should support new traditions that promote a respectful co-existence with nature and wildlife.

The Japanese government continues to support ‘traditions’ such as whaling and dolphin drive hunts that are out of step with contemporary, international views towards nature and wildlife. As such, it is not surprising that we have been the target of severe international criticism, which harms our diplomatic position in the world. The Japanese government seems to attempt somehow to garner support for outdated national policies by stirring up nationalism, stating “To protect the food culture of Japan, we must not give in to foreign pressure,” or putting up a reason for dolphin drives, stating “We must protect our 400 year history and tradition of whaling. Taiji, the ‘Whaling Town’ cannot live without whaling”

Despite the fact that most of the citizens of Taiji have no investment or connection with whaling or dolphin hunting, the town has become well-known internationally as a “Whaling Town,” but only in a negative way. It is doubtful that this is what the citizens of Taiji desire; yet it is only exacerbated by the position of the Japanese government.

By supporting the dolphin drive hunts, the policies and position of the Japanese government harm not only dolphins but the health and well being of Japanese people, particularly in Taiji. We are hopeful for a change that will bring our nation closer to those of other ‘modern’ countries and with contemporary, global views about the appropriate treatment of wild animals and natural resources.

Table 1 A Report of Toxic Substances in Dolphin Meat

Provisional regulatory levels of mercury and PCBs set by the Japanese government:
 Mercury (T-Hg):0.4ppm, Methyl mercury (M-Hg):0.3ppm, PCBs:0.5ppm

| Date | Sample | A : T-Hg (ppm) | B : M-Hg (ppm) | C : PCBs (ppm) | Extent of contamination | Testing facility | Source | Notes |
|-------------|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|---|------------------|---|--|
| May 17,2011 | iruka (dolphin) | 1.4 | 0.63 | 0.82 | A: 3.5 times higher than the <u>maximum allowance level</u> B: 2.1:times higher than the m.a.l. | NSBC(*) | BlueVoice.org & Elsa Nature Conservancy | Hunted off the coast of Taiji Purchased at "Shimoji," in Tanabe City, Wakayama. |
| May 17,2011 | irukaharabo (dolphin, belly) | 2.88 | 1.5 | 0.21 | A: 7.2 times higher than the m.a.l. B: 5 times higher than the m.a.l. | NSBC | BlueVoice.org & Elsa Nature Conservancy | Hunted off the coast of Taiji Purchased at "Okuwa" in Shingu City. |
| May 17,2011 | irukaharabo (dolphin, belly) | 3.03 | 1.4 | 0.29 | A: 7.575 times higher than the m.a.l. B: 4.66 times higher than the m.a.l. | NSBC | BlueVoice.org & Elsa Nature Conservancy | Hunted off the coast of Taiji Purchased at "Okuwa" in Shingu City. |
| May 17,2011 | irukaharabo (dolphin, belly) | 2.84 | 1.4 | 0.23 | A: 7.1 times higher than the m.a.l. B: 4.66 times higher than the m.a.l. | NSBC | BlueVoice.org & Elsa Nature Conservancy | Hunted off the coast of Taiji Purchased at "Okuwa" in Shingu City. |
| May 17,2011 | gondou(tail) | 7.32 | 2.6 | 0.15 | A :18.3 times higher than the m.a.l. B: 8.66 times higher than the m.a.l | NSBC | BlueVoice.org & Elsa Nature Conservancy | Hunted off the coast of Taiji Purchased at the supermarket of Taiji Fishery Cooperative Gondou=short finned pilot whale |
| May 17,2011 | Mairuka(belly) | 1.59 | 0.67 | 1.9 | A: 3.975 times higher than the m.a.l B: 2.23 times higher than the m.a.l C: 3.8 times higher than the m.a.l | NSBC | BlueVoice.org & Elsa Nature Conservancy | Hunted off the coast of Taiji Purchased at the supermarket of Taiji Fishery Cooperative Mairuka=striped dolphin |
| May 17,2011 | blubber of irukaharabo (dolphin, belly) | — | — | 9.6 | C: 19.2 times higher than the m.a.l. | NSBC | BlueVoice.org & Elsa Nature Conservancy | Hunted off the coast of Taiji Purchased at "Okuwa" in Shingu City. |

(*)NSBC=Nihon Shokuhin Bunseki Center (Japan Food Research Laboratories)

(Made by BlueVoice.org & Elsa Nature Conservancy)

Table 2 Actual Catches of Japan's Dolphin Drives (2000~2010)

| Place | Fiscal | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010(**) | Total |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------|
| | Year | 2000/10/1 | 2001/10/1 | 2002/10/1 | 2003/10/1 | 2004/10/1 | 2005/10/1 | 2006/10/1 | 2007/9/1 | 2008/9/1 | 2009/9/1 | 2010/9/1 | |
| | Period | ~ 2001/4/30 | ~ 2002/4/30 | ~ 2003/4/30 | ~ 2004/4/30 | ~ 2005/4/30 | ~ 2006/4/30 | ~ 2007/4/30 | ~ 2008/4/30 | ~ 2009/4/30 | ~ 2010/4/30 | ~ 2011/4/30 | |
| Taiji | Striped dolphin | 450 | 450 | 447 | 444 | 450 | 449 | 450 | 450 | 510 (* !) | 443 | 393 | 4,936 |
| | Bottlenose dolphin | 890 | 197 | 637 | 264 | 593 | 142 | 404 | 264 | 189 | 392 | 354 | 4,326 |
| | Spotted dolphin | 27 | 0 | 400 | 102 | 0 | 0 | 400 | 0 | 329 | 19 | 173 | 1,450 |
| | Risso's dolphin | 300 | 300 | 292 | 299 | 300 | 300 | 300 | 295 | 290 | 285 | 246 | 3,207 |
| | Short-finned pilot whale | 111 | 210 | 55 | 117 | 0 | 49 | 189 | 243 | 148 | 170 | 0(***) | 1,292 |
| | False killer whale | 0 | 29 | 7 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 83 |
| | Pacific white-sided dolphin | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 17 | 18 | 27 | 24 | 86 |
| | Total | 1,778 | 1,186 | 1,838 | 1,243 | 1,343 | 940 | 1,773 | 1,269 | 1,484 | 1,336 | 1,190 | 15,380 |
| Futo | Bottlenose dolphin | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 24 (*) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 24 |
| Grand Total | | 1,778 | 1,186 | 1,838 | 1,243 | 1,367 | 940 | 1,773 | 1,269 | 1,484 | 1,336 | 1,190 | 15,404 |

Notes:

☆Futo didn't conduct dolphin drives during 2000~2003 and 2005~2010. **(*)The number of catches in 2004 is formally 24 dolphins, but the actual number is higher.**

In Taiji: Dolphins:October 1 to the last day of the following February. Gondous:October 1 to April 30 of the following year, but the hunting season in Taiji has changed to start on September 1 since 2007. (Decided in 2006.)

☆Species: The Japan Fisheries Agency added the Pacific white-sided dolphins to the catch quota in 2007.

As to other species, the quota of the number to be caught has been changed every year since 2007.

(* !) The striped dolphin was caught over the catch-quota, which is 450. 60 animals were overhunted in 2008.

(**) In 2010, the hunting season was extended for a month in Taiji, and fishermen were allowed to hunt short-finned pilot whales and false killer whales until May 31, 2011.

(***) 74 short-finned pilot whales (68 for meat and 6 for aquariums) were captured from May 2 through May 31.

Source:

Based on the list made by Junichiro Yamashita, former Taiji Town Councilman, and investigation by Elsa Nature Conservancy.

"Japan's Dolphin Drive Fisheries:Propped up by the Aquarium Industry and 'Scientific Studies'," Elsa Nature Conservancy, 2005

Made by Elsa Nature Conservancy, 2011

Table 3 Numbers of Dolphins Captured in Drives in Shizuoka Prefecture (Kawana and Futo)
(Beginning in 1984, Futo operated alone)

| | Dolphins caught | | | | | Notes |
|------|-----------------|---------|---------------------|---------|------------|---------------------------------------|
| | Total | Striped | False Killer Whales | Spotted | Bottlenose | |
| 1970 | 5,348 | 5,348 | | | | |
| 1971 | 3,315 | 3,315 | | | | |
| 1972 | 7,235 | 7,235 | | | | |
| 1973 | 6,799 | 6,799 | | | | |
| 1974 | 11,715 | 11,715 | | | | |
| 1975 | 5,996 | 5,996 | | | | |
| 1976 | 5,265 | 5,175 | | | 90 | |
| 1977 | 4,941 | 4,580 | | 237 | 124 | |
| 1978 | 4,671 | 2,028 | 123 | 2,520 | | |
| 1979 | 2,625 | 1,300 | 0 | 1,325 | 0 | |
| 1980 | 5,588 | 5,278 | 0 | 310 | 0 | Spotter boats reduced to 2. |
| 1981 | 283 | 73 | 20 | 169 | 21 | |
| 1982 | 2,596 | 246 | | 2,350 | | |
| 1983 | 2,316 | 40 | ※ | 2,276 | (※) | (※) |
| 1984 | 935 | 925 | ※ | ※ | 10 | Futo begins operating alone ※ |
| 1985 | 805 | 578 | 5 | 146 | 76 | Spotter boats reduced to 1. |
| 1986 | 198 | 0 | 0 | 198 | 0 | |
| 1987 | 1,815 | 0 | 0 | 1,815 | 0 | |
| 1988 | 690 | 356 | 0 | 310 | 24 | |
| 1989 | 102 | 102 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 1990 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 1991 | 32 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 1992 | 285 | 285 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 1993 | 95 | 0 | 0 | 95 | 0 | Limits placed on catches and species. |
| 1994 | 51 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 51 | |
| 1995 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 1996 | 69 | 0 | *28 | 0 | 69 | *Estimated number illegally caught. ※ |
| 1997 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 1998 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 1999 | 75 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 75+*2 | *Estimated number illegally caught. ※ |
| 2000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| 2001 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |

(※:Number caught unknown.)

Table based on records currently remaining at the Futo Branch of the Ito City Fishing Coop.

Total number caught in 1996 is 97 if estimated number illegally caught is added.

Total number caught in 1999 is 77 if estimated number illegally caught is added.

According to data released by the Fisheries Agency, 4,020 striped dolphins were taken in 1977, and none in 1992.

Notes:

Documents released by the Fisheries Agency, documents of the Futo Branch of the Ito City Fishing Cooperative, and documents compiled by Shizuoka Prefecture all give different figures for the numbers of dolphins captured.

Local fishermen say that much is unclear about the recorded numbers of dolphins taken, and accurate figures are not available for many years. This shows that monitoring agencies have not been doing their job.