

Due to excessive whaling, many species of whale are near extinction



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Australia is opposed to whaling, but it is a Japanese tradition to eat whale meat, and taking whale consumption away from their culture would devastate the whole nation and economy. But do we, as one species have the right to kill off another species? Whales have a right to freedom just as much as we do, shouldn't they live normal lives the way mother nature intended them to? On the other hand, shouldn't Japan have the right to eat what they want to eat? This proposed sanctuary might give the whales' back their freedom, but what about Japans culture? Will a sanctuary help? If the proposed Southern Pacific Whale Sanctuary does go ahead, this would give the whales the much-needed time to repopulate. The population of whales have decreased immensely over the past generation. Estimated numbers as of the year 1997 show that the Blue Whales' original level was at 228, 000 and in 1997 the Blue Whales' population was at is 11, 700.

That is a decrease of 216, 300, that's 95%. As for the Humpback whale, their original population was 115, 000 and now there are only approximately 10, 000 left. That's a 91% decrease. Also for the Right Whale, there original level was 100, 000, and now, there is only 3200, that's 96% of the population gone. It is clearly evident, just from viewing the population decreases in these 3 species, that the Sanctuary would help the whales increase their populations, and put them at lesser risk of extinction. But a whale sanctuary would not only be beneficial to whales there are many benefits to humans as well.

A southern pacific whale sanctuary will provide economic benefits to many South-Pacific nations through whale watching. And will also give the

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opportunity to learn more about whales and the way they affect the ecosystem. As you can see there are many benefits of the proposed Southern Pacific Whale Sanctuary, but of course there is one downside. In Japan, whale is considered the best food imaginable.

And eating whale goes back centuries in their culture. When has one nation told another what they can and cant eat? Seafood is a very important part of their diet, to them Whale is just another source of protein, and only westerners believe that whales are special. Also, if the whale moratorium is lifted, and commercial whaling begins, then many job opportunities will open up. Seafood is a very high money making industry in Japan, recently one Blue Fin sold for \$300, 000. Whaling is an industry that employs many Japanese that would otherwise not have jobs.

Whale meat would usually sell for up to \$240. 00 a kilo, and tail meat would usually sell for \$950. 00 a kilo. Also, no part of the whale is wasted, parts that are not sold at fish markets, are used in items such as make-up, animal food, fertilizer etc. But excessive whaling is making our whale populations drop dramatically, is the life of one species really worth risking just for the stomachs of rich and hungry Japanese? Some say that the whales eat too much and killing them just levels up the eco system, is this true? But are there any sources that back-up this fact? Other than Japanese pride and wanting to win the war for whaling, one of the main points put ahead for whaling is that the whales eat too much.

One newspaper article even said that if we don't kill the whales they'd take over the world and compete with humans for food. I wanted to research this

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topic a bit more, because I truly wondered whether the whales did eat a lot of food or not. Great whales do not eat tuna, Fin whales do not eat tuna or other commercially important species, nor do they compete with them directly for food. Most great whales in the South Pacific are baleen whales, which means they do not have teeth. Blue, southern right, humpback and minke whales are all filter feeders, feeding on plankton and Antarctic krill and fasting during migration and on breeding grounds in the South Pacific.

Some whales, including sperm, Bryde's and minke, feed on small quantities of fish and squid species not commercially exploited. Most great whales feed in Antarctic waters, within the Southern Ocean Sanctuary. Whales migrate to the warmer waters of the South Pacific to mate, calve and rear their young. They fast during this time and generally do not feed when migrating to these warmer waters.

By the time they return to the Southern Ocean, they have lost much of their body condition and this is why whalers preferred to catch whales on their northward migration or in their feeding grounds, rather than on their southward migration. The only populations in the South Pacific to have shown any increase in numbers in the past 10 years are the Australian humpback and southern right whales, both of which are still severely depleted. These species feed only in Antarctic and sub-Antarctic waters. In June 2000 the scientific committee of the IWC found that for the most abundant species, the Southern Hemisphere minke whale, population estimates were noticeably lower than earlier estimates.

Information on other populations is too scarce to make reliable estimates of numbers. The whales are too important to make up nonsense about them such as they eat too much, but the evidence clearly shows they do not. The whales of our world are endangered and near extinction. The fact that they are being killed is nothing compared to how they are being killed. The death of the whale is caused as a result of its organs being shattered by iron fragments from the head of the harpoon. Although death is brought about by a most horrible method, in the cases where it occurs instantaneously, the act of killing may be said to be not inhumane.

But if the death is not instantaneous, or does not happen quickly, the animal is required to suffer from these truly terrible injuries for at the least three minutes and more usually up to five or seven minutes until a killer harpoon can be fired. Over the years various methods have been used to kill whales, methods such as electrical harpoons, carbon dioxide harpoons, compressed gas (air) harpoons, drugs and high velocity projectiles. In 1996, a group of researchers provided an analysis of time to death for the 218 whales taken in the 1995 Norwegian Commercial Minke whale hunt they account: "...

all signs of life ceased instantaneously (10 seconds) in 62 per cent of the whales. The upper quartile (75 per cent) of the survival times was at 240 seconds. The mean time from the shot until all signs of life ceased was 204 seconds. Signs of life were seen for more than 10 minutes in 11 per cent and more than 15 minutes in 4 per cent of the animals. The longest time to death was 43 minutes 20 seconds.

All the animals that survived for more than 15 minutes broke free and had to be re-shot. " As you can see many whales did not die instantaneously, this indicates that many of the whales are killed inhumanely. ' Humane Killing' of an animal means causing its death without pain, stress or distress perceptible to the animal. This consists of a process which causes instant insensibility, the duration of which persists until death intervenes. No animal should be killed unless they are killed humanely.

Whales deserve freedom, the right to roam the oceans freely. To live their majestic lives the way Mother Nature intended them to. Besides killing whale is unnecessary, Japan does not rely on whale meat to survive. It is a luxury market, and is preserved for the very rich. On the whole, there is no reasonable reason to be killing the whales.

The life of whales is very important to the ecosystem. Killing them is unnecessary, inhumane, cruel, brutal, merciless, and heartless. From the information I have gathered, I believe that it is completely unnecessary to hunt/kill/eat whales. If Japan is in desperate need of whale meat, then they should breed whales especially to be killed and eaten. The proposed Southern Pacific Sanctuary would be a magnificent idea, and it would give whales such as the Right Whale (who's status is vulnerable) and the Blue whale (who's status is endangered), the much needed time to boost their numbers.

The southern ocean is where whales breed and nurture their young before migrating. A large amount of the whales' lives are spent in that area, and it will be good to know that while they are in that area, they are well protected

from illegal hunters. It will be good to know that when my children are alive, they will have the opportunity to see an abundant amount of whales frolicking magically through the ocean, and I believe the only way that will happen is if there is a ban on commercial whaling (and scientific whaling) and if the sanctuary goes ahead. The world has lost many species already through mistakes that could have been prevented; this can be prevented. So lets do what we can now before it's too late.