

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Publications, Agencies and Staff of the U.S.
Department of Commerce

U.S. Department of Commerce

5-25-1995

Whaling error

Robert L. Brownell Jr.

Southwest Fisheries Science Center, rlbcetacea@aol.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/usdeptcommercepub>



Part of the [Environmental Sciences Commons](#)

Brownell, Robert L. Jr., "Whaling error" (1995). *Publications, Agencies and Staff of the U.S. Department of Commerce*. 120.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/usdeptcommercepub/120>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the U.S. Department of Commerce at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Publications, Agencies and Staff of the U.S. Department of Commerce by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

moratorium on commercial whaling began in 1986. In every case, the IWC advised Japan and Norway to reconsider the lethal aspects of their research programmes. Last year, however, Norway started a commercial hunt in combination with its scientific catch, despite the IWC moratorium.

Norway is not bound by the IWC moratorium because it entered an objection when the moratorium was adopted. Early this year, the government of Norway announced that it was setting a commercial quota of 301 minke whales for the 1995 season. (No research catch is scheduled for 1995.) The 1995 hunt of 301 whales is the same number as was set in 1994 for the combined research and commercial catches. Norway's commercial whaling quota is said to be calculated using the IWC's Revised Management Procedure (RMP) combined with the Scientific Committee's 1992 abundance estimate of 86,700 minke whales in the northeast Atlantic. The RMP, on which the IWC Scientific Committee (SC) has worked for a number of years, was accepted in principle by the IWC Commission in 1994, but it has not yet been applied to quotas for commercial whaling. Norway's setting of a commercial quota is completely independent.

The abundance estimate of northeast Atlantic minke whales is now in question (as noted in *Nature* 374, 587; 1995). At this year's meeting of the IWC SC, the methodology for estimating the abundance of this population will be reviewed in detail. Now that this abundance estimate is in question, Norway (using a new abundance estimate of 69,900) has reduced its 1995 quota by 23 per cent to 232. In fact, Norway's commercial hunt started on 2 May (six days before the start of the IWC SC review of the abundance estimate). Is Norway's unilateral action a rush to allow its whalers to kill the maximum number of whales before the IWC SC (which has been meeting 8–20 May 1995) provides a revised abundance estimate?

Robert L. Brownell Jr

*Southwest Fisheries Science Center,
PO Box 271,*

La Jolla, California 92038, USA

Whaling error

SIR — You published recently (*Nature* 374, 587; 1995) a report headed "Error re-opens 'scientific' whaling debate".

The error in question, however, relates to commercial whaling, not to scientific whaling. Although Norway cites science as a basis for the way in which it sets its own quota, scientific whaling means something quite different, namely killing whales for research purposes. Any member of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) has the right to conduct a research catch under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, 1946. The IWC has reviewed new research or scientific whaling programmes for Japan and Norway since the IWC