

HISTORICAL WHALING RECORDS

HISTORICAL WHALING RECORDS. Tillman, M. F. and Donovan, G. P. (editors). 1983. Cambridge, International Whaling Commission (Reports of the IWC, Special issue 5). 269p, illustrated, hard cover. £24.

Recently there has been increasing interest among biologists, geographers, maritime historians and others in historical records of whaling. These include the manuscript log books and journals of voyages, customs and other records of catches and production, shipping records of the numbers of vessels and ports involved, and the distribution of vessels on the different whaling grounds. Biologists are examining the possibility of these records providing information, for example, on the former distribution of whale species, the size of different whale stocks at the start of whaling, and the numbers of whales killed but lost and not processed. In 1976 a Working Group on Historical Studies met as part of the FAO Scientific Consultation on Marine Mammals held in Bergen, Norway. Arising from this meeting, an International Workshop on Historical Whaling Records was held in September 1977 at the Kendall Whaling Museum, Sharon, Massachusetts. A short account of the meeting in *Polar Record* (Gambell 1978) notes the conclusion that analysis of historical whaling records is a feasible approach in determining the status of some stocks of whales through studies of initial stock size and trends in abundance. Such studies are therefore of importance in the work of the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

Historical Whaling Records includes the report of the workshop, together with revised versions of eleven of the contributed papers, and a further seven papers presented to the IWC Scientific Committee between 1980 and 1982. Of the seven additional papers, five concern two projects recommended by the workshop: the effects of pelagic whaling on Bowhead whales in the western Arctic between 1848 and 1914, and seasonal distribution and catch composition of American Sperm whaling in the north-west Pacific Ocean between 1822 and 1868. The sixth additional paper deals with the catch history, abundance and present status of Humpback whales in the north-west Atlantic Ocean; it gathers evidence from many sources to arrive at a cumulative catch estimate, for comparison with current estimates of population size. The seventh paper examines nineteenth century whaling records from the western Indian Ocean, with special reference to the whaling grounds involved and the species caught or reported seen.

Of the workshop papers, three deal with stock assessment problems of importance to the IWC, for which historical records may be valuable; they discuss the data required for such assessments and the population models involved. Two papers discuss the limitations of searching log books and private journals for the data required for stock assessment and other purposes, illustrating the problems by reference to American whaling logbooks from voyages in the period 1840 to 1890. The logbook was the official record of a whaling voyage and a report to the owners on the voyage in which a large sum of money was invested. Normally three entries were made daily, recording the working of the vessel and events on board early in the morning, at mid-day, and in the latter part of the day. Entries are usually terse and the amount of information provided, and its usefulness to biologists and others, depends very much upon the logkeeper's education and interest. The private journals of voyages usually provide a more detailed record of events on board.

The relevance of historical records to stock assessments of Sperm whales was discussed in four papers presented at the workshop, two of which are combined in the published version. One paper describes a methodology for recording Sperm whale data from

logbooks and includes suggested formats for data extraction. Additional examples of such formats for Sperm whale and Bowhead whale data are given in appendices to the workshop report itself. Another paper examines the use of logbook data for studying certain aspects of the social structure of Sperm whale populations. Here again the logbook of a particular voyage to the Pacific Ocean in the years 1836 to 1840 is analysed. The third paper in this group uses published records to reconstruct the catch history of eighteenth and nineteenth century Sperm whaling. The effects of changing operational methods on whaling effort, and the numbers of whales lost and not processed for various reasons are considered. Finally, a list is given of the data required from logbooks and other records to allow evaluation of the effect of this historic whaling on the stocks of Sperm whales.

The remaining paper in the volume gives a short account of the life, cycle, distribution, migration and stocks of the Greenland (Bowhead) whale, based on published sources, and of the history of whaling for this species. The nature and extent of the available statistics for the Greenland whale fishery from European ports are discussed. The Dutch statistics are the only readily available series covering all of the whaling ports of a country taking part in this fishery, and they are tabulated, analysed and compared with published German and some British statistics. Appendices list some of the sources of Dutch, German and British statistics and tabulate whaling statistics for Harburg, based on a manuscript in the State Archive there.

As indicated, most of the papers relate to the use of historical whaling records, especially logbooks and journals, as a source of data for the study of biological problems related to the management of whale stocks. They do, however, contain much on the kinds of information contained in these manuscript records of voyages and on methods of extracting and tabulating this information for detailed analysis. This well-produced volume is therefore a valuable reference and an important addition to the work of Henderson (1972), Ross (1975), Stackpole (1969) and others, who have also recently used whaling logbooks and journals to good effect.

References

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AUSTRALIA IN ANTARCTICA

ANTARCTIC ODYSSEY. Law, Phillip. 1983. Richmond, Australia, Heinemann. 284p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0–85859–320–3. A\$35.00.

Phillip Law is particularly well qualified to write about Australian post-war Antarctic work since he was Director of the Department of External Affairs Antarctic Division from 1949 to 1966. Part I of *Antarctic Odyssey* opens with an historical chapter describing early Australian Antarctic interests, followed by twelve chapters detailing the establishment