

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR



RESTRICTED  
THE NORTHWEST ATLANTIC FISHERIES

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ANNUAL MEETING - JUNE 1968

Report of Meeting of Panel A (Seal)  
Hamburg, 12 October 1967





Serial No. 1961  
(B.e.67)

P.O. Box 638  
Dartmouth, N.S., Canada

4 December 1967

Report of the Meeting of Panel A (Seal)  
Hamburg, 12 October 1967

1. The meeting was opened by the Chairman, Dr A.W.H. Needler (Canada), and representatives of all Panel A members (Canada, Denmark, Norway) were present (Appendix I).

The Chairman referred to the purpose of the meeting as outlined in the recommendations contained in ICNAF Proceedings No.7 of the Annual Meeting, June 1967... "that seal scientists from Canada, Denmark and Norway meet in Hamburg at the time of the next ICES meeting to consider research requirements and formulate a coordinated program to provide the data required for determination of population estimates and sustainable yields" and "that representatives of Canada, Denmark and Norway meet in Hamburg at the time of the ICES meeting next fall to give serious consideration to sealing regulations both from the conservation and humane points of view and to discuss international inspection and possible joint enforcement procedures."

2. Rapporteur

Mr Lund (Norway) proposed and the Panel agreed that Dr Sprules (Canada) should act as Rapporteur.

3. Agenda

The agenda as circulated was adopted with the understanding that Item 7 should read "Present and future conservation measures" (Appendix II)

4. Reception of Briefs

The Chairman informed the Panel that requests had been received from three international organizations to present briefs to the meeting. He introduced Dr Elizabeth Simpson who was present to speak on behalf of the World Federation for the Protection of Animals and the New Brunswick Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and Mr A.G. Bourne who would address the meeting on behalf of the Survival Service Commission of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Although a request had been received no representative was present to speak on behalf of the International Society for the Protection of Animals.

Dr Simpson referred to the joint brief of the WFFA and NBSPCA which had not been received in time to be considered by the Panel at its last meeting held in Boston in June (Appendix III). She stated that the WFFA represented 100 societies located on five continents and requested that the Panel give serious consideration to the proposals contained in the brief which she understood had been circulated to all Panel members after the Boston meeting. Dr Simpson stated that she was now a staff member of the Department of Animal Pathology at the University of Cambridge and that she had conducted post-mortem examinations on the carcasses of a random sample of 154 newly-born harp seals in the Gulf of St. Lawrence from 7 to 9 March 1967. She reviewed the results of her investigation and distributed copies of a published report reprinted from Nature, Vol.214, No.5094, p.1274 only, 17 June 1967.

Mr Lund (Norway) expressed appreciation of the efforts of the many associations concerned with the humane aspects of sealing operations and stated that the Norwegian industry and government were prepared to cooperate in all possible ways. He said that new Norwegian sealing regulations were being drafted to give effect to the assurances he had given at the Boston meeting of the Panel and that measures similar to those contained in the Canadian sealing regulations would be in effect for Norwegian sealers operating in 1968.

Mr Bourne presented the following brief on behalf of the Survival Service Commission of the IUCN:

"The Survival Service Commission is concerned with the exploitation of the seal stocks in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and in the Front Areas. We are aware of the intense research effort by the scientists in the employ of the sealing nations and hope that this will continue. But, most important in our opinion is that the recommendations regarding the size of the cull made by the scientists should be accepted by this Panel of ICNAF, which represents those interested in the resource. The rational exploitation of any stock of wild animals can only be successful if based on a scientific evaluation of the resource. Unless the sealing industry acknowledges this by accepting and acting on the advice of their scientists they will find themselves in the same situation the whaling industry finds itself today and this panel and ICNAF will face a similar failure to conserve the raw material upon which their industry depends."

Dr Needler (Canada) thanked Mr Bourne and pointed out that Canada has established an annual quota on harp seals of less than a year in age for licensed vessels and aircraft operating in one district of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The average annual catch by landsmen was taken into account when the quota was established and the total annual production of young harp seals in the Gulf of St. Lawrence is maintained at a figure below the estimated annual sustainable yield as determined from the most recent scientific data.

5. Proposed IBP Project on Marine Mammals

Mr Day reviewed the proposal which had been circulated to specialists and international organizations by the Section Productivity Marine (PM) of the International Biological Programme (IBP) of the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) on 27 July 1967, for a programme aiming at the coordination of research and the improvement of communication on 23 marine mammals including harp and hood seals. The Panel took note of the proposal and agreed that no specific comments could be made at this time. It was understood that cooperation would be provided by the national agencies directly involved in marine mammal investigations.

6. Report on Status of Seal Fishery and Research

Dr Rasmussen (Norway) presented the report of the Scientific Advisers to Panel A who had met under his chairmanship on Wednesday, 11 October (Appendix IV). The Panel expressed its appreciation to the scientific advisers and accepted the report with the understanding that paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 of section 5 would be combined to form one paragraph when the report is reproduced in final form.

During the discussion of the report the Panel took special note of the recommendation of the scientific advisers that the data for determination of the sustainable yield of harp seals in the Front Area be reviewed with the ICNAF Assessment Subcommittee at the time of the next Annual Meeting of ICNAF and a joint recommendation be prepared for consideration by the Panel at that time.

7. Present and Future Conservation Measures

The Chairman reviewed the current situation with regard to the recommendation for conservation measures for the 1968 sealing season which had been made by the Panel and adopted by the Commission at the last Annual Meeting in Boston. He said the recommendation had been circulated by the Depositary Government and that it was assumed that ratification by the Member Governments concerned would bring the new regulations into force before the 1968 sealing season.

The Panel members had no proposals for additional conservation measures to be submitted to the Commission at this time and on the suggestion of Mr Lund (Norway) it was agreed that if a Panel member wishes to have such a proposal considered at the next Annual Meeting it should be circulated to the other Panel members by 31 January 1968.

8. Possible International Inspection Scheme and Joint Enforcement Procedures

Mr Lund (Norway) advised the meeting that Norway was prepared to accept international inspection of its sealing operations provided that a satisfactory arrangement could be made with other sealing nations. He said he had prepared a draft proposal based on the international inspection scheme adopted recently by the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission and had given a copy to Dr Needler (Canada) for review and comment. Mr Lund stated that it would not be possible for Norway to place an inspector on board each Norwegian sealing vessel and thus some joint enforcement scheme with Canada would be desirable.

Dr Needler stated that Canada was in favour of some international inspection scheme provided new implementing legislation would not be required. He said the Norwegian proposal would be reviewed and comments would be submitted by correspondence in an attempt to arrive at an acceptable arrangement for the 1968 sealing season. It was understood that Denmark would not be directly involved in such a scheme because sealing operations in Greenland were confined to inshore waters for the most part.

9. Future research

The Panel members accepted the research plans submitted by the scientific advisers in their report and commended the scientists of the three member nations for the development of an effective coordinated research program including exchange of data and biological specimens.

10. Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Panel would be held at the same time and place as the next Annual Meeting of ICNAF.

11. Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Approval of Report

It was agreed that the rapporteur would prepare a draft report of the meeting which would be sent to Dr Needler (Canada), Mr Lassen (Denmark) and Mr Lund (Norway) for review and comment and subsequently approved by correspondence.

13. Press Release

It was decided that a press release would not be prepared.

14. Adjournment

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 1610 hours

Meeting of Panel A (Harp and Hood Seals)  
Hamburg, 12 October 1967

Participants

CANADA

Dr A.W.H.Needler, Head of Delegation (Chairman)  
Dr W.M.Sprules (Rapporteur)  
Dr G.F.M.Smith  
Dr Y. Jean  
Dr D.E.Sergeant  
Mr K. Karlsen  
Mr J.C.Grieve

DENMARK

Mr H.J.Lassen, Head of Delegation  
Mr Sv. Aa. Horsted  
Dr E. Smidt

NORWAY

Mr O. Lund, Head of Delegation  
Dr B. Rasmussen  
Mr P. Karlsen  
Mr G. Jakobsen  
Mr I. Nes  
Mr T. Øritsland  
Mr E. Aas

ICNAF

Mr L.R.Day, Executive Secretary

WORLD FEDERATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS

Dr Elizabeth Simpson

SURVIVAL SERVICE COMMISSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURE

Mr A.G.Bourne

Meeting of Panel A (Harp and Hood Seals)  
Hamburg, 12 October 1967

Agenda

1. Opening remarks by Chairman, Dr A.W.H.Needler (Canada)
2. Selection of Rapporteur
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. WFPA and New Brunswick SPCA Brief on the 'Front' Harp and Hood Seal Hunt  
5 June 1967
5. Proposed IBP Project on Marine Mammals, 27 July 1967
6. Report on status of seal fishery and research carried out
7. Present and future conservation measures
8. Possible international inspection scheme and possible joint enforcement  
procedures
9. Future research
10. Next meeting
11. Other business
12. Approval of report
13. Press release
14. Adjournment

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BRIEF  
ON THE "FRONT" HARP SEAL AND HOODED SEAL HUNT  
SUBMITTED TO  
THE  
INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE NORTHWEST ATLANTIC FISHERIES  
BY  
BRIAN D. DAVIES  
ON BEHALF OF  
THE WORLD FEDERATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS  
AND  
NEW BRUNSWICK SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

5 June 1967



In 1965, 1966 and 1967, this writer witnessed part of the harp seal hunt in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Canada. On two occasions, a veterinary pathologist accompanied me, and her findings, together with my own observations, resulted in a report to both the World Federation for the Protection of Animals, and the New Brunswick SPCA, that the harp seal hunt in the Gulf of St. Lawrence was cruel, and that there appeared to be no practical way of making it not cruel. As a result of this report, the WFPA and the New Brunswick SPCA have adopted a policy of abolition with respect to the commercial harp seal and hooded seal fishery off the east coast of Canada.

The WFPA, which has a wider sphere of influence than the New Brunswick SPCA, has adopted the same policy of abolition for commercial seal hunting all over the world. This is not to say, however, that this policy will not be modified, as and where, it seems in the best interest of animal welfare.

In view of the foregoing, this writer respectfully requests that the International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries consider complete cessation of the harp seal and hooded seal hunt on the "Front" area of the northwest Atlantic. Should ICNAF not be in a position to implement such a policy at this time, this writer respectfully submits, on behalf of WFPA and the New Brunswick SPCA, the following suggested regulations to be applicable to all vessels engaged in the commercial seal fishery on the "Front":

1. That "quintering" be prohibited.
2. That hunting seals during the hours of darkness be prohibited.
3. That ship movement through the herds in such a way that seals are crushed be prohibited.
4. That hunting adult seals in breeding patches be prohibited.
5. That the season for hooded seals not open until the 25th of March in any year.
6. That baby seals only be killed by a blow over the front of the skull with a regulation club (the size of such club to be determined by a panel from ICNAF), and that the skull of each animal be completely crushed before skinning commences.
7. That ropes with hooks attached be prohibited from the hunt area.
8. That adult seals be completely protected.

9. That only rifles firing bullets larger than .22 and with a flat trajectory be used if No.8 above is rejected.
10. That the use of aircraft for hunting or spotting be prohibited.
11. That a quota be established.
12. That a composite force of inspectors from all the countries involved in the 'Front' seal fisheries be on hand, in sufficient numbers, to adequately enforce whatever regulations are made. At a ratio of at least one inspector to every three hunters.
13. That adult females defending pups not be molested, or the pups killed.
14. That the countries involved in the "Front" seal fishery, unilaterally adopt legislation that would provide for penalties for their nationals for any contravention of whatever regulations are finally enacted with regard to the "Front" seal fishery.
15. That overnight "panning" be prohibited (due to "Front" ice conditions).

Report of Meeting of Scientific Advisers to Panel A  
Hamburg, 11 October 1967

1. The meeting was called to order at 1500 hrs by the Chairman, Dr B. Rasmussen (Norway), who welcomed the delegates and observers (Annex 1).
2. The agenda was adopted (Annex 2)
3. Dr G.F.M. Smith (Canada) acted as Rapporteur.
4. The Chairman briefly reviewed the reports of meetings of the Scientific Advisers to Panel A, the Seal Assessment Working Group and Panel A held at Boston in June 1967 (ICNAF Meeting Proceedings No. 7 with Appendix and Annex).
5. The Chairman called for reports (Annex 3) on the status of the seal fishery and research. Dr Sergeant (Canada) and Mr Øritsland (Norway) reported that revised 1967 statistics were now available for ICNAF (ICNAF Serial No. 1882 - Canada; ICNAF Serial No. 1959 - Norway). Mr Øritsland stated that the subdivision of harp seal pelt types, exactly as requested by the Assessment Working Group, was not practical for the Norwegian fishery on the Front but as much detail as could be had would be supplied.

Dr Sprules (Canada) and Dr Rasmussen (Norway) agreed that the historical records from Canada and Norway would be supplied in as much detail as possible for publication in the ICNAF Statistical Bulletin and for the use of the ICNAF Assessment Group

Mr Øritsland (Norway) reviewed briefly some data and analysis of pelt types taken on the Front. Graphs of these were deposited with the ICNAF Secretariat (ICNAF Serial No. 1960).

Dr Sergeant (Canada) presented his paper on Canadian research (ICNAF Serial No. 1952). It appears that the annual Gulf catch should not exceed about 85,000 harp seals which is about the catch in the last few years. The sustainable catch on the Front at the present annual reproductive rate is about 90,000 harp seals which is less than recent captures. The current reproduction of young harp seals at the Front is about 200,000 per year.

Dr Rasmussen (Norway) offered to supply jaws to Dr Sergeant (Canada) for age determination from large Norwegian samples taken at the Front. Jaw bones can also be supplied by the Industry and from Greenland by Denmark.

Dr Rasmussen stressed the value of a large scale tagging program in the Gulf to understand better the discreteness of Gulf and Front stocks.

Mr Øritsland (Norway) suggested that serological studies might be of value in separating stocks. Two Norwegian samples have already been obtained from the Front but none yet from the Gulf. It is suggested that samples from the Gulf could be obtained in 1968 for Norwegian analysis with Canadian cooperation.

The importance of catch and effort statistics for use in population estimation was stressed.

6. Under the item Conservation Measures, the Scientific Advisers agreed that they were convinced by the evidence that the harp seal herd on the Front was being overexploited at the current capture rate and that the catch should be limited to the sustainable yield. Dr Sergeant's (Canada) paper (ICNAF Serial No. 1952) indicates that this is between 75,000 and 90,000 harp seals. The Scientific Advisers

recommend

that the data for this sustainable yield be reviewed with the ICNAF Assessment Subcommittee and a joint recommendation be prepared for Panel A at its 1968 meeting.

It is noted that the Scientific Advisers and the ad hoc Seal Assessment Group have already expressed concern on this matter.

7. The Scientific Advisers noted the IBP proposed project on Marine Mammals forwarded under cover of letter of 27 July 1967, but has no suggestions to offer.
8. The Scientific Advisers agreed to meet at the time of the next ICNAF Meeting.
9. The Scientific Advisers confirmed Dr Rasmussen (Norway) as its Chairman for 1967/68.
10. The meeting adjourned at 1745 hrs.

Meeting of Scientific Advisers to Panel A  
Hamburg, 11 October 1967

Participants

CANADA

Dr A.W.H. Needler  
Dr W.M. Sprules  
Dr G.F.M. Smith (Rapporteur)  
Dr Y. Jean  
Dr D.E. Sergeant  
Mr K. Karlsen  
Mr J. Grieve

DENMARK

Mr Sv. Aa. Horsted  
Dr E. Smidt

NORWAY

Dr B. Rasmussen (Chairman)  
Mr T. Øritsland  
Mr Chr. Rieber  
Mr P. Karlsen

ICNAF

Mr L.R. Day

Meeting of Scientific Advisers to Panel A (Harp and Hood Seals)  
Hamburg, 11 October 1967

Agenda

1. Opening remarks by Chairman, Dr B. Rasmussen (Norway)
2. Rapporteur
3. Agenda
4. Review of meetings of Panel A, Boston, 6 June 1967, and of Scientific Advisers to Panel A, Boston, 3 June 1967
5. Proposed IBP Project on Marine Mammals, 27 July 1967
6. Status of seal fishery and research
  - (a) Catch and effort statistics including a historical review of statistics on sealing in the Northwest Atlantic for the ICNAF Statistical Bulletin
  - (b) Research on tagging, craniometry and serology (Canada and Norway); aerial photo survey on Front to North Labrador (Canada); teeth and ovaries of Front harp seals (Canada, in Greenland (Denmark) and in commercial catches (Norway), stomach analyses (Canada, Denmark, Norway)
7. Review of present and proposed conservation measures
8. Coordinated research program to provide data required for population estimates and sustainable yields by the scientists of the Scientific Advisers and the Assessments Subcommittee of Research & Statistics
9. Other business
10. Adjournment

Meeting of Scientific Advisers to Panel A  
Hamburg, 11 October 1967

Contributions

- Contribution No.1 - Canadian research on harp seals in 1967, with further results  
(Serial No.1952) from 1966 and previous years. by D.E.Sergeant
- Contribution No.2 - Canadian sealing statistics, 1967  
(Serial No.1882)
- Contribution No.3 - Revised catch and effort statistics for the Norwegian hunt  
(Serial No.1959) in the Front and Gulf Areas, 1937-67. by Torger Øritsland
- Contribution No.4 - Provisional analysis of Norwegian catches of harp seal pups  
(Serial No.1960) in the Front Area, Newfoundland. by Torger Øritsland