

MARINE MAMMAL RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION IN SRI LANKA, 1985–1986. Stephen Leatherwood and Randall R. Reeves (Eds) 1989. United Nations Environment Programme, Marine Mammal Technical Report Number 1, vii + 138 pp.

Between 1978 and 1983, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) developed the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Management and Utilization of Marine Mammals. This plan was supported by the UNEP, FAO, IUCN and the IWC. In 1979, the IWC declared that the Indian Ocean, north of 55°S, would be a marine mammal sanctuary for 10 years.

In 1983, the Sri Lankan National Aquatic Resources Agency (NARA) asked the UNEP for support for its research on marine mammals in Sri Lankan waters. This report was compiled from the papers submitted to the UNEP by NARA.

The first part of the report gives an overview of the development of Sri Lankan fisheries. In a rather compact paper the growth and ongoing mechanization of

the fisheries are described and an account is given of the influence of economical and political factors (national policies and foreign aid).

The second part deals with the interaction between fisheries and marine mammals (cetaceans and dugongs). Among the interactions described are familiar topics, such as drowning in gill nets and the ghost net problems. Interesting is the observation that there has been a shift from accidental capture towards directed fisheries for marine mammals, due to the development of a market for marine mammal products.

In this short report an attempt is made to give a detailed review of all the aspects of a full scale conservation and research programme. All factors that play a role in this process, such as culture, history and tradition, politics, economics and social factors are taken into account. Because of this wide range of topics, the report is at times very sketchy, more like a short collection of anecdotes. Included in this report is a large number of tables and lists, which are discussed in the text only briefly, making the text at times difficult to read. However, the editors added summaries and conclusions at several points in the text, which are short, clear and to the point and which make up for a lot.

This is an interesting overview of a conservation programme in an area about which we hear very little. However, the editors have tried to pack too much information into a limited space. They should either have elaborated more on a lot of subjects, thereby increasing the size of the report, or they should have left out the details. In the current form the report is more a list of events than the reference work it should have been.

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