

Editorial, News and Views

Volume 13, No. 2 of 'Aquatic Mammals' contains several interesting papers, four of which were given at recent conferences, which indicates how important these meetings have become over the 15 years since their inception at Harderwijk. In the United Kingdom, there is still no further move forward on the position following the Klinowska Report, but around the world there has been progress on disseminating information about cetacea. The European Cetacean Society has been founded, following on the 1985 meeting of the International Harbour Porpoise meeting at Kolmardens in Sweden funded by the Swedish WWF. The agreed objectives of the Society are to promote and co-ordinate the scientific study and conservation of cetaceans, and to gather and disseminate information about cetaceans to members, and to the public at large. Membership is open to anyone on payment of a modest subscription. Peter Evans from the Zoological Department of the University of Oxford, South Parks Road, Oxford, OX1 3PS, UK agreed to become the Secretary, and further information may be obtained direct from him.

The Seventh Biannual Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals is being held in December under the aegis of the Society for Marine Mammalogy at Miami, Florida, and information may be obtained from Dr Daniel O'Dell, University of Miami, 4600 Rickenbacker Causeway, Miami, Florida 33149-1098, USA. Although the IAAAM meeting has now taken place, members might like to be reminded that the Secretary of this Association is Dr M. Solangi from the Institute of Marine Mammals, PO Box 4078, Gulfport, Missouri 39502, USA.

An article in the 'New Scientist' of the 12 March reported on Randy Brill's work (at Brookfield, Chicago) on identifying how dolphins listen to ultra-sonic pulses emitted for reasons of echo-location. He covered the whole of an animal's lower jaw in a hood, which was made of two varieties. One was of ordinary neoprene, which hardly affects sound transmission, and the other was of closed cell foamed neoprene, which attenuated sound by 40 decibels. Using the control hood, the ability of the animal to distinguish between a ring and a cylinder was of the order of 70% correct responses, but with the experimental hood, blocking the ultra-sound, the results were no better than would be expected by chance. It appeared, therefore, that to echo-locate under the conditions of this experiment, this particular animal performed better with an unobstructed lower jaw. It is interesting to note that without the hood, the ultra-sound consisted of long trains of many clicks, following closely on one another, whereas with the experimental hoods, the trains of clicks were shorter, with fewer clicks and longer intervals between.

The recently published Volume 3, No. 1 of 'Marine Mammal Science' contains articles on the ocular fundus of two cetacea, growth layer groups in the teeth of an adult Beluga whale of known age, giving evidence of two annual layers, audiometric assessment of Northern fur seals, relative abundance and distribution of cetacean schools in the Eastern tropical Pacific, and a paper on the external morphology and pigmentation of Phocoena sinus, together with notes on *Steno bredanensis* in the Mediterranean, and the placenta of the killer whale.

Volume 9 of the journal of Vancouver Aquarium has a number of interesting articles on the origin of cetacea, sound emission and reception in water, and cetacean social organization and behaviour, which covers a number of species. It also has a paper by Sharon Proctor covering navigation and a review of so-called intelligence in the cetacean brain. This latter article points out that it is incorrect to call cetaceans intelligent in the same way human beings are so-called, and comments that cetaceans don't need human intelligence foisted upon them anyway! Certainly, this latest issue, which may be obtained from the Vancouver Public Aquariums Association in Stanley Park, PO Box 3232, Vancouver BC, Canada confirms the lead which this organization has taken in presenting cetacea to the public, and in carrying out non-invasive research upon them.

The Journal of Zoology, Volume 211, Part 4, published in April, contains an interesting article by Sheila Anderson and Michael Fedak from the British Antarctic Survey, Cambridge, which shows that Grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) mothers invest more energy in raising male pups to weaning than in raising female pups, although they tend (the male pups) to be larger and more numerous in number at birth.