Editorial

Welcome to the final issue of the sixth volume of the *Journal of Cetacean Research and Management*. This has been another good year for the Journal. A total of 34 papers have been published involving some 120 authors from 24 countries (including from Europe, Africa, Asia, Australasia, North America and South America). I am particularly pleased at the wide geographic spread and range of disciplines included. The published papers once again serve to illustrate that the *Journal* is fulfilling its aim of improving conservation science in general and in particular the conservation and management of cetaceans throughout the world. An author and keyword index to Volume 6 appears at the end of this issue.

The present issue again covers a broad range of subjects, areas and species. One of the most endangered species of the great whales is the North Atlantic right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*) – even the largest population, that in the western North Atlantic, numbers only about 300 animals (see *Journal of Cetacean Research and Management* (special issue 2)). Any human induced mortality threatens the survival of this population. In order to mitigate the direct threats (largely ship strikes and entanglement in fishing gear), it is important to try and understand the cause of death in any carcases found. This is the subject of the paper by Moore *et al.* A related species, the bowhead whale is the subject of a paper on feeding ecology which provides fascinating new information on the nature and extent of feeding during the spring and autumn migrations.

For the effective management of any population, it is important to understand its abundance. This volume includes two papers presenting abundance estimates obtained from individual identification mark-recapture analyses (humpback whales off Brazil, Freitas *et al.*; Irrawaddy dolphins, Kreb). Similar data are used to examine site fidelity in the marine tucuxi (Azevedo *et al.*). Line-transect surveys are perhaps the most common way of estimating cetacean abundance. Proper interpretation of those, particularly when looking at long-term studies requires a good understanding of relevant covariates. This is the subject of a paper by Murase *et al.*

Related to the interpretation of abundance data is the question of distribution and stock structure. De March *et al.* discuss an integrative approach to addressing stock structure in white whales using contaminant profiles and molecular genetics. With respect to distribution, Moore *et al.* report on the most northerly record of Gervais' beaked whale while Scheidat *et al.* examine the summer distribution of harbour porpoises in the German North Sea and the Baltic. This is extremely important given the critical status of that species in the Baltic Sea. Harbour porpoises from the same regions are the subject of a paper examining the birth period by Hasselmeier *et al.*

Incidental capture of cetaceans in fishing gear is one of the most important threats to their conservation. Documentation and mitigation of this threat is a frequent subject of papers to the *Journal.* This issue includes a paper by Burdett and McFee on bottlenose dolphins taken by the Atlantic blue crab fishery in South Carolina, USA.

The quality of any Journal is a reflection of the quality and dedication of its reviewers. I would like to thank publicly here all those scientists who dedicate a considerable period of time to offering constructive and valuable criticism and advice on submitted manuscripts. This not only ensures the high quality of published papers but also serves to improve the quality of cetacean management science throughout the world. An updated list of referees can be found on the journal website (*http://www.iwcoffice.org/Publications/reviewers.htm*).

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Editor