
Editorial

Welcome to this the first issue of the fifth volume of the *Journal*. This volume contains eleven papers covering a wide range of important management issues. At the centre of wise management is good knowledge of the status of the stock. Fundamental to this is some estimate of absolute or relative abundance. In an ideal situation, time trends of such indices are available. However, long time series (such as those for the IWC's circumpolar Antarctic surveys that have occurred since the late 1970s) require careful interpretation. A number of factors unrelated to actual population abundance may affect the results of sightings surveys. The paper by Mori *et al.* addresses one of these – observer experience, whilst the paper by Teilmann looks at the effect of seastate.

Information on abundance is difficult if not impossible to interpret in a management context if there is no associated information on stock structure and identity. This issue is of major importance in cetacean management and is relevant to a number of papers in this issue: Secchi *et al.*, Valsecchi *et al.*, and Clapham *et al.* The last paper also deals with abundance and biological parameters and once again illustrates the value of long time series of data, such as the individual identification data available for western North Atlantic humpback whales.

In recent years' the advantages of developing full management procedures have been recognised and the IWC

Scientific Committee pioneered the way with its work on the Revised Management Procedure (e.g. see the Editorial in *J. Cetacean Res. Manage.* 4(2) and recent supplements to the *Journal*). More recently attention has turned to the management of aboriginal subsistence whaling and the Commission has now adopted the 'Bowhead SLA' for future management of bowhead whales of the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort Seas stock. The development of this strike limit algorithm was a co-operative effort. The two key innovative and original approaches are presented in papers in this issue (Dereksdóttir and Magnússon; Givens). Related to this is a challenging paper by Witting, who looks at the history of the eastern gray whales in the North Pacific and questions whether traditional density-dependent dynamics can be used to explain the past dynamics of this stock and more importantly, its future dynamics.

Direct hunting is clearly not the only management issue facing cetaceans and the final two papers in this volume concern chemical pollutants in the Mediterranean Sea (Fossi *et al.*) and unregulated whalewatching activities in Patagonia, Argentina (Coscarella *et al.*).

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