

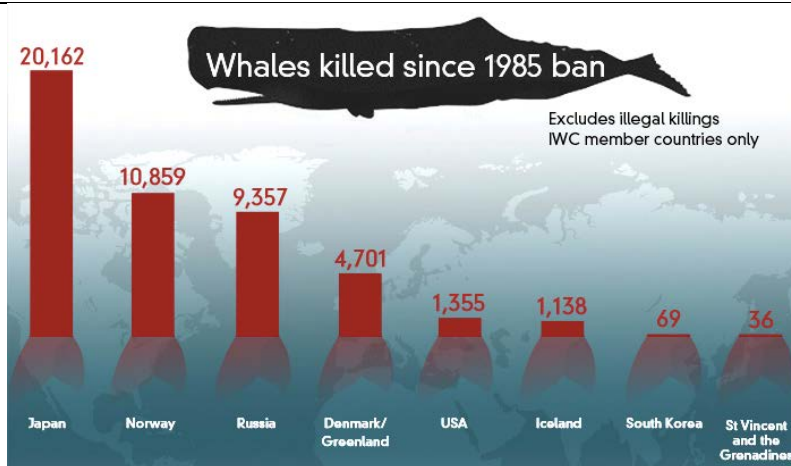
Research Activity Report
Supported by “Leading Graduate Program in Primatology and Wildlife Science”

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1. Country/location of visit
Japan, Kyoto University
2. Outreach project
Conserv’Session#6: Mission Blue and discussion with Prof. Hiroyuki Matsuda (Yokohama National University)
3. Date
2017. 04. 13
4. Main host researcher and affiliation
None
5. Progress and results of your outreach activity
<p>Gaining knowledge regarding <i>unagi</i></p> <p>Recently, a friend of mine told me that she had been invited by her advisor to have dinner at a “unagi” restaurant in Inuyama. Concerned, as Japanese eels (<i>Anguilla japonica</i>) are endangered (IUCN, 2014), I told her that I would personally boycott this place, and pushed the controversy even further by saying that eating in such restaurant is no different than eating in a restaurant serving common chimpanzee (<i>Pan troglodytes</i>) meat for example. But, she calmed me by saying that Japanese eels are now probably bred in captivity, making the conservation argument irrelevant. Unsure about it, I kept this in a corner of my head to find out about it. This session was then the perfect opportunity to ask Prof. Hiroyuki Matsuda (Yokohama National University) – our invited speaker about it. With honesty, he said that there is currently no proper monitoring system for Japanese <i>unagi</i> fishing and that you put your life at risk if you want to investigate it. Someone in the audience, doing her PhD on Japanese eels, confirmed my doubts about the captive breeding. Juveniles are caught at sea (hence the still decreasing number) and then grow in captivity because it is still too costly and difficult to breed them entirely in captivity. This is why Conserv’Session is a good way to educate the public about conservation issues.</p> <p>A film, a movement</p> <p>Mission Blue (2014) is not only a movie but also the name of the NGO and movement founded by Dr. Sylvia Earle after she won a TED prize in 2009. She introduced the notion of “Hope spots” – special places that are vital to the health of the ocean (https://www.mission-blue.org/about/) which led to inspire action to protect at least 30% of the ocean by 2030. In September 2016, at the start of the IUCN World Conservation Congress, she met with former US President Barack Obama to create what was by then the largest protected marine area on Earth off Hawaii (in October 2016, part of the Ross Sea in Antarctica became the world’s new largest marine reserve).</p> <p>Discussing whaling and more</p> <p>Following the film, Prof. Hiroyuki Matsuda gave a talk about marine protected areas in the context of sustainable development goals (set up by the United Nations in 2015). We then discussed about different issues sensitive and relevant to marine conservation and even human health in Japan. Victory! We got our first question ever in Japanese by a member of the public about the potential dangers of consuming fish from previously contaminated marine areas such as the coast of Fukushima. Prof. Hiroyuki Matsuda answered this concern by saying that levels of radioactivity in the sea around Fukushima have reached radioactivity levels that are now safe for seafood consumption. Another part of the discussion focused on whaling in Japan. Prof. Matsuda has been a member of the International Whaling Committee for many years and therefore knows quite well the general concerns about “scientific whaling” in Japan. Japan does not conform to any other country regulations regarding whaling and he shyly admitted that scientific whaling is used to get around the international censorship regarding commercial whaling.</p>

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Number of whales killed around the world since 1985. Figures sourced from the International Whaling Commission (2015).

A positive initiative

During the discussion, Moe Yanagi (Conserv’Session member) shared an initiative from Sailors for the Sea Japan (<http://sailorsforthesea.org/programs/ocean-watch/blue-seafood-guide>) which created a Blue Seafood guide listing fishes coming from sustainable sources. This initiative was followed up by Kyoto University, which now proposes one Blue Seafood menu (fish curry) at the canteen in front of the clock tower. And we hope that this is just a start!



Screening of Mission Blue, discussion with Prof. Hiroyuki Matsuda and dinner at what is becoming our local energy supplier

6. Others

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank PWS for its continuous support; our invited speaker: Prof. Hiroyuki Matsuda for coming all the way from Yokohama to participate in this event and share about his experience with us; Dr. Naobi Okayasu for helping us to find a speaker; and Miku Akiyama and Yoko Sakai for their great logistical support.