

Document 2

Dolphin drive hunting

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Dolphin drive hunting, also called **dolphin drive fishing**, is a method of hunting dolphins and occasionally other small cetaceans by driving them together with boats and then usually into a bay or onto a beach. Their escape is prevented by closing off the route to the open sea or ocean with boats and nets. Dolphins are hunted this way in several places around the world. The largest number of dolphins are hunted using this method in Japan, however the practice also occurs in places as far apart as the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific, the Faroe Islands in the North Atlantic, and Peru in South America. Dolphins are mostly hunted for their meat; some are captured and end up in dolphinariums.



Atlantic White-sided Dolphin caught in a drive hunt in Hvalba on the Faroe Islands being taken away with a forklift

Despite the highly controversial nature of the hunt resulting in international criticism, and the possible health risk that the often polluted meat causes, many thousands of dolphins are caught in drive hunts each year.

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Japan

See also: Fishing industry in Japan and Whaling in Japan

In Japan, Striped, Spotted, Risso's, and Bottlenose dolphins are most commonly hunted, but several other species such as the False Killer Whale are also occasionally caught. A small number of Orcas have been caught in the past. Relatively few Striped Dolphins are found in the coastal waters, probably due to

hunting.^[1] Drive catches in 2007 amounted to 384 Striped Dolphins, 300 Bottlenose Dolphins, 312 Risso's Dolphins and 243 Southern Short Finned Pilot Whales, for a total of 1,239 animals. These numbers do not include dolphins or other small whale species killed using various other methods, such as offshore harpoon hunts, in which mainly porpoises are killed. Another 77 Bottlenose Dolphins, 8 Risso Dolphins, 5 Southern Short Finned Pilot Whales were captured for use in the entertainment industry in Japan, China, Korea, and Taiwan. The quota set by the government for the species that were targeted in drive hunts that year allowed for the capture of 685 Striped Dolphins, 1,018 Bottlenose Dolphins, 541 Risso's Dolphins, and 369 Southern Short Finned Pilot Whales. The quota applies to all hunting methods.^[2]

The Japanese town of Taiji on the Kii peninsula is as of now the only town in Japan where drive hunting still takes place on a large scale. In the town of Futo the last known hunt took place in 2004.^[3] In 2007 Taiji wanted to step up its dolphin hunting programs, approving an estimated ¥330 million for the construction of a massive cetacean slaughterhouse in an effort to popularize the consumption of dolphins in the country.^[4] However, an increase in criticism and the considerable toxicity of the meat appears to be achieving the opposite. During the first hunt of the season in Taiji in 2009, an estimated 50 Pilot Whales and 100 Bottlenose Dolphins were captured. Although all the Pilot Whales were killed, and 30 Bottlenose Dolphins were taken for use in dolphinariums, the 70 remaining animals were set free again instead of being killed for consumption.^[5]

Method

In Japan, the hunting is done by a select group of fishermen.^[6] When a pod of dolphins has been spotted, they're driven into a bay by the fishermen while banging on metal rods in the water to scare and confuse the dolphins. When the dolphins are in the bay, it is quickly closed off with nets so the dolphins cannot escape. The dolphins are usually not caught and killed immediately, but instead left to calm down over night. The following day, the dolphins are caught one by one and killed. The killing of the animals used to be done by slitting their throats, but the Japanese government banned this method and now dolphins may officially only be killed by driving a metal pin into the neck of the dolphin, which causes them to die within seconds.^[7] It is not clear if this ban is strictly enforced however, as eyewitness reports of similar throat-slitting and evisceration style killings were reported as late as October and November 2006.^[8]

Entertainment industry

As briefly mentioned above, occasionally, some of the captured dolphins are left alive and taken to mainly, but not exclusively, Japanese dolphinariums.^[9] In the past, dolphins have also been exported to the United States for several parks including the well known SeaWorld parks.^[10] The US National Marine Fisheries Service has refused a permit for Marine World Africa USA on one occasion to import four False Killer Whales caught in a Japanese drive hunt. In recent years, dolphins from the Japanese drive hunts have been exported to China and Taiwan.^[11] On multiple occasions, members of the International Marine Animal Trainers Association (<http://www.imata.org/>) (IMATA) have also been observed at the drive hunts in Japan.^[12]



Bottlenose Dolphin being lifted onto the back of a truck

Human health concerns

The meat and blubber of the dolphins caught has been found to have extremely high levels of mercury, cadmium, the pesticide DDT, and organic contaminants like PCBs.^{[13][14][15]} The levels are high enough to pose a health risk for those frequently eating the meat and researchers warn that children and pregnant women shouldn't eat the meat at all. Because of the health concerns, the price of dolphin meat has decreased significantly.^[16]

In 2010, hair samples from 1,137 Taiji residents was tested for mercury by the National Institute for Minimata Disease. The average amount of methyl mercury found in the hair samples was 11.0 parts per million for men and 6.63 ppm for women, compared with an average of 2.47 ppm for men and 1.64 ppm for women in tests conducted in 14 other locations in Japan. One hundred eighty-two Taiji residents showing extremely high mercury levels underwent further medical testing to check for symptoms of mercury poisoning. None of the Taiji residents, however, displayed any of the traditional symptoms of mercury poisoning, according to the Institute.^{[17][18]} Japan's National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, however, reports that the mortality rate for Taiji and nearby Koazagawa, where dolphin meat is also consumed, is over 50% higher than the rate for similarly-sized villages throughout Japan.^[19] The chief of the NIMD, Koji Okamoto, said, "We presume that the high mercury concentrations are due to the intake of dolphin and whale meat. There were not any particular cases of damaged health, but seeing as how there were some especially high concentration levels found, we would like to continue conducting surveys here."^[20]

Due to its low food self-sufficiency rate, around 40%, Japan relies on stockpiling to secure a stable food supply.^[21] As of 2009, Japan's 1.2 million ton seafood stockpile included nearly 5000 tons of whale meat.^[22] Japan has started to serve whale meat in school lunches as part of a government initiative to reduce the amounts.^[23] However, there has been criticism of serving whale meat to school children due to allegations of toxic methyl mercury levels.^[24] Consequently, Taiji's bid to expand their school lunch programs to include dolphin and whale meat brought about much controversy. An estimated 150 kg (330 lbs) of dolphin meat was served in Taiji school lunches in 2006. In 2009, dolphin meat was taken off school menus because of the contamination.^[25] The levels of mercury and methylmercury taken from samples of dolphin and whale meat sold at supermarkets most likely to be providing the schools' lunch programs was 10 times that advised by the Japanese Health Ministry. The mercury levels were so high that the Okuwa Co. supermarket chain in Japan permanently removed dolphin meat from its shelves.^[26]

The World Wildlife Fund has also estimated that the Japanese government has had to invest \$12 million into the 2008-09 Antarctic whale hunt alone just to break even, and that subsidies in total have amounted to approximately \$150 million since 1988.^[27]

Protests

Protest and campaigns are now common in Taiji. In 2003, two activists were arrested for cutting fishing nets to release captured dolphins.^[28] They were detained for 23 days. In 2007, American actress Hayden Panettiere was involved in a confrontation with Japanese fishermen as she tried to disrupt the hunt. She paddled out on a surfboard, with five other surfers from Australia and the United States, in an attempt to reach a pod of dolphins that had been captured. The following confrontation lasted more than 10 minutes before the surfers were forced to return to the beach. The surfers drove straight to Osaka airport and left the country to avoid being arrested for trespassing by the Japanese police.^[29] Taiji's fishery cooperative union argues that these protesters "continue willfully to distort the facts about this fishery" and that protester's agendas are "based neither on international law nor on science but rather on emotion

for economic self-interest."^[30] Some of the animal welfare organizations campaigning against the drive hunts are Sea Shepherd, One Voice,^[31] BlueVoice,^[32] the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, and the World Society for the Protection of Animals.

Since much of the criticism is the result of photos and videos taken during the hunt and slaughter, it is now common for the final capture and slaughter to take place on site inside a tent or under a plastic cover, out of sight from the public. The most circulated footage is probably that of the drive and subsequent capture and slaughter process taken in Futo in October 1999 (a still of which can be seen on the right), shot by the Japanese animal welfare organization Elsa Nature Conservancy (http://www.elsaenc.net/index_e.htm). Part of this footage was, amongst others, shown on CNN. In recent years, the video has also become widespread on the internet and was featured in the animal welfare documentary *Earthlings*, though the method of killing dolphins as shown in this video is now officially banned. In 2009, a critical documentary on the hunts in Japan titled *The Cove* was released and shown amongst others at the Sundance Film Festival. Well known are also the images from Iki Island taken in 1979 of a Japanese fisherman stabbing dolphins to death with spears in shallow water.^[33]

The offshore harpoon hunts as mentioned earlier receive very little attention in the media.

Solomon Islands

On a smaller scale, drive hunting for dolphins also takes place on the Solomon Islands, more specifically on the island of Malaita. The meat is shared equally by every household. Dolphin's teeth are also used in jewelry and as currency on the island.^[34] The dolphins are hunted in a similar fashion as in Japan, using stones instead of metal rods to produce sounds to scare and confuse the dolphins. Various species are hunted, such as Spotted and Spinner dolphins.^[35] The amount of dolphins killed each year is not known, but anecdotal information suggests between 600 and 1500 dolphins per hunting season.^[36] The hunting season lasts roughly from December to April, when the dolphins are closest to shore.^[37] As in Japan, some dolphins (exclusively Bottlenoses) from the Solomon Islands have also been sold to the entertainment industry.^[38] There was much controversy in July of 2003, when 28 Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus aduncus*) were exported to Parque Nizuc, a water park in Cancun. A large portion of the animals were later transported to Cozumel, to do interaction programs. Though the export of dolphins had been banned in 2005,^[39] the export of dolphins was resumed in October 2007 when the ban was lifted following a court decision, allowing for 28 dolphins to be sent to a dolphinarium in Dubai. A further three dolphins were found dead near the holding pens.^[40] The dealer



A Bottlenose Dolphin caught in a drive hunt in the Japanese town of Futo moving violently after having its throat cut. Officially, this method of killing dolphins is now illegal in Japan.



Dolphins in a canoe after having been captured by locals on the Solomon Islands.

that exported these dolphins has stated that they intend to release their 17 remaining dolphins back into the wild in the future.^[41]

In April 2009 it was decided by CITES that an in-depth review of the commercial dolphin trade conducted from the Solomon Islands should take place, this after the IUCN Cetacean Specialist Group came to the conclusion that insufficient population data exists to prove the sustainability of the wild captures and the current export quota of 100 animals per year.^[42] The Solomon Island Dolphin Abundance Project, a survey project that's expect to run till 2010, aims to provide data on the size of the local Indo-Pacific Bottlenose population.^[43]

The capture and trade of wild dolphins is prohibited in the Western Province of the Solomon Islands.^[44]

Kiribati

Similar drive hunting existed in Kiribati at least until the mid 20th century.^[45]

Faroe Islands

See also: Whaling in the Faroe Islands

On the Faroe Islands mainly Pilot Whales are killed by drive hunts for their meat. Though officially this is the only species hunted, other species are also killed on rare occasion such as the Northern bottlenose whale and Atlantic White-sided Dolphin. The hunt is known by the locals as the Grindadráp. There are no fixed hunting seasons, as soon as a pod close enough to land is spotted fishermen set out to begin the hunt. The animals are driven onto the beach with boats, blocking off the way to the ocean. When on the beach, most of them get stuck. Those that have remained too far in the water are dragged onto the beach by driving a steel hook into the blubber of the animal, though these days in response to allegations of animal cruelty they're more often dragged by putting a hook in their blowhole. When on land, they are killed by cutting down to the major arteries and spinal cord at the neck. The time it takes for a dolphin to die varies from a few seconds to a few minutes, depending on the cut.^[46] When the fishermen fail to beach the animals all together, they are let free again.



Pilot whale meat (black) and blubber (middle) and dried fish (left) and potatoes, a typical meal on the Faroe Islands.

The pilot whale stock in the eastern and central North Atlantic is estimated to number 778,000. About a thousand pilot whales are killed this way each year on the Faroe Islands together with usually a few dozen up to a few hundred animals belonging to other small cetaceans species, but numbers vary greatly per year.^[47] The amount of Pilot Whales killed each year is not believed to be a threat to the sustainability of the population,^[48] but the brutality of the hunt has resulted in international criticism especially from animal welfare organisations.

As in Japan, here too the meat is contaminated with mercury and cadmium, causing a health risk for those frequently eating it. Again, especially children and pregnant women are at risk.^[49] In November

2008, the *New Scientist* reported in an article that research done on the Faroe Islands resulted in two chief medical officers recommending against the consumption of Pilot Whale meat, considering it to be too toxic.^[50] In 2008 the local authorities recommended to no longer eat Pilot Whale meat due to the contamination, and this has resulted in reduced consumption, according to a senior Faroese health official.^[51]

Peru

Though it is forbidden under Peruvian law to hunt dolphins or eat their meat, a large number of dolphins are still killed illegally by fishermen each year. Although exact numbers are not known, the Peruvian organisation *Mundo Azul* (*Blue World*) estimates that at least a thousand are killed annually. To catch the dolphins, they are driven together with boats and encircled with nets, then harpooned, dragged on to the boat, and clubbed to death if still alive. Various species are hunted, such as the Bottlenose and Dusky Dolphin.^[52]



Two dead Northern Bottlenose Whales with cut necks in the bay of Nes on the Faroe Islands

Taiwan

On the Penghu Islands in Taiwan, drive fishing of Bottlenose Dolphins was practiced until 1990, when the practice was outlawed by the government. Mainly Indian Ocean Bottlenose Dolphins but also common Bottlenose Dolphins were captured in these hunts.^[53]

Hawaii

In ancient Hawaii, fishermen used to hunt dolphins for their meat by driving them onto the beach and killing them. In their ancient legal system, dolphin meat was considered to be kapu (forbidden) for women together with several other kinds of food. Today, dolphin drive hunting no longer takes place in Hawaii.^[54]

See also

- Animal welfare
- The Cove (film)
- The Taiji Twelve
- Whaling

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External links

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- Faroe Islands official whaling website (<http://www.whaling.fo/>)
- Atlanticblue e.V. website, with current information about the Taiji dolphin hunt in Japan (<http://www.atlanticblue.de/>) (German only)
- Create worldwide awareness of dolphin slaughter and high level of toxic mercury in dolphin meat (<http://www.takepart.com/thecove/>)
- 3D animation of how a drive works, including links to two videos (<http://web.archive.org/web/20070703180122/http://www.earthisland.org/saveTaijiDolphins/movi>)
- Video at Glumbert.com - well known footage of a drive hunt in Futo in 1999 (<http://www.glumbert.com:80/media/dolphin>)
- Video report produced by BlueVoice.org (<http://www.tappedinto.com/asx/bluevoice/Japandolphins.ram>)
- Video about the Taiji drive hunts from November 2007 produced by atlanticblue.de (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wK3lg_ufHg&eurl=http://www.atlanticblue.de/index.php?id=41&type=1)
- CNN report on the Taiji drive hunts, 11 February 2008. (<http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/02/11/japan.dolphins/index.html>)

Mercury poisoning

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