In memoriam

Francisco Coloane has recently passed away. This Chilean writer received the national literature award and wrote about Patagonia, Cape Horn and Antarctica's landscapes. His books have been translated into English, German, Russian, French, Portuguese, Greek and other languages. He was a man who truly loved his environment and will certainly be missed.

ALL ABOARD!! - ECO GOES TO SEA

WHAT’S YOUR EXCUSE?

No matter how many declarations of good will are made by CCAMLR Parties, the truth is that toothfish populations are under severe stress as a consequence of IUU fishing activities in the Southern Ocean. ECO is particularly concerned that CCAMLR has minimized the enormity of this problem, even though CCAMLR's own report admits that actual IUU catches are much higher.

ACTPs cannot keep turning a “deaf ear” to the fact that CCAMLR members have been involved in these fishy activities nor can they claim that it is only a problem where flags of convenience have been used and because of that they can do nothing else.

We encourage those Parties still committed to the spirit of the Antarctic Treaty, the Madrid Protocol and CCAMLR, to not surrender their role as stewards of Antarctica and its surrounding Southern Ocean.

Important issues regarding toothfish conservation are going to be discussed in the next few months. We encourage Antarctic Treaty Parties to discuss the whole issue of IUU fishing activities in the Southern Ocean with a more holistic approach. We do not need to remind the Parties that CCAMLR is not a fishing convention but is supposed to be a conservation one, using an “ecosystem as a whole approach.” However, CCAMLR in recent years is behaving more and more like a fishing convention.

This is an issue that needs to be discussed by delegates under Agenda Item 4a “Operations of the Antarctic Treaty System”. There are many “tools” available to ATCPs if they honestly want to stop pirate fishing in the Southern Ocean. These include cooperative use of satellite data to track the pirates, cooperation on enforcement actions, use of port-state jurisdiction, and pressure on recalcitrant states.

WHAT A RACKET!!!

Human-caused noise is a serious problem in the marine environment. In Antarctic waters, human noise pollution may interfere with the navigation, feeding, communication and breeding behavior of marine animals. As it is unclear what levels of exposure to noise trigger serious harm in marine animals, a precautionary approach is required.

A variety of bodies, including the International Whaling Commission, and SCAR at this meeting, have pointed to the impacts that introduced noise has on marine mammals. A recent mass stranding of cetaceans has been linked to the use of military mid-frequency sonar.

SCAR’s Working Paper 23 makes valuable recommendations about the research needed to identify potential problems with acoustic devices in the Antarctic marine environment.

ECO is concerned about a powerful military sonar system under development by the U.S. Navy and NATO (Low Frequency Active Sonar - LFAS) to detect and track “quiet” submarines. LFAS will have effects on over 800,000 km$^2$ of ocean, and may therefore have effects in Antarctic waters.

In moving forward with LFAS, the U.S. and its NATO partners are ignoring the Precautionary Principle, provisions of the Law of the Sea Convention, as well as other international obligations relating to the marine environment.

ECO observes that, in Antarctica this discussion was triggered by German scientists keen to overturn inconvenient regulations set by Federal agencies. They seem to have used SCAR to build a coalition of opposition to the reasonable constraints imposed by these agencies. It is a lousy precedent, which will surely return to haunt the Antarctic community if established.
IS IT HOT DOWN HERE, OR IS IT JUST US?

Thousands of species living on the Antarctic seabed will become extinct if computer models predicting warmer waters in the region in the coming century are correct. Studies conducted by the British Antarctic Survey show that many cold-blooded invertebrates that populate the edge of the icy continent will struggle to survive if the environment changes as projected.

Professor Lloyd Peck and colleagues looked at how sea spiders, clams, isopods and other animals reacted when the temperature of their habitat waters was raised in line with climatologists' forecasts.

Every organism in the study died. Professor Peck says: "In this part of the world we have some of the most exotic animals on the planet. These groups are under threat."

The periphery of Antarctica has seen some extreme changes in recent years. The Peninsula region, for example, has warmed up faster than almost anywhere on Earth - an increase of 2.5 degrees Celsius in the last 50 years. Computer models suggest sea temperatures in this area could rise by four or five degrees in the next 100 years, which would challenge the physiology of many creatures.

"The problem…is that they have a limited ability to carry oxygen around the body. As their temperature goes up with the temperature of the sea, their requirement for oxygen goes up and eventually they reach a point where they can't supply enough to their tissues and they basically asphyxiate at their upper lethal temperatures." Peck notes that the animals began to experience problems even at lower temperature rises of only two to three degrees.

Another wake up call for all governments – but especially for those Antarctic Treaty Parties that so far have refused even to take the first step of ratifying the Kyoto Protocol.

Pablo’s Penguin Times
Pablo at the ATCM

Pablo had a lovely weekend traveling with various delegates to places around Poland. He is very happy that so many people here are so friendly and helpful. He saw many delegates in Krakow, and noted some interesting groups walking around. He thinks that it is lovely to see so many delegates from so many different countries together. If asked privately, Pablo will admit that he was a little frightened of the fire-breathing dragon. Pablo also went shopping while out and about – bought four lovely amber necklaces for his four favorite little penguinys back home. Unfortunately, he was not using a basket to carry all of his goods, the thin plastic packet broke, and they all fell to the floor - so much for a package deal. Flippers are not good things to try and pick bits and pieces up with!

Pablo and all his cousins are excited about the upcoming discussions this week. As he was always taught by his mother to clean up his mess, he can’t quite understand why other people weren’t taught the same thing. Maybe it’s a penguin thing?

In other news, Pablo’s Russian cousin Petka was excited to be invited to the reception at the Palace. It’s not often a penguin gets to go to a party. He has grown so fond of Polish vodka. Last night he drank white wine.