

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
MARINE MAMMAL
COMMISSION CALENDAR YEAR
1987: A REPORT TO CONGRESS**

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Annual report of the Marine Mammal Commission calendar year 1987: a report to Congress by Various

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VARIOUS

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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION, CALENDAR YEAR 1987

A REPORT TO CONGRESS



Marine Mammal Commission
1625 I Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
31 January 1988

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

CALENDAR YEAR 1987

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

This is the fifteenth Annual Report of the Marine Mammal Commission, covering the period from 1 January through 31 December 1987. It is being submitted to Congress pursuant to section 204 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972.

Established under Title II of the Act, the Marine Mammal Commission is an independent agency of the Executive Branch. It is charged with the responsibility for developing, reviewing, and making recommendations on actions and policies for all Federal agencies with respect to marine mammal protection and conservation and for carrying out a research program.

Personnel

The Commission consists of three part-time Commissioners who are appointed by the President. The Marine Mammal Protection Act requires that the Commissioners be knowledgeable in marine ecology and resource management. At the beginning of 1987, the Commissioners were Robert Elsner, Ph.D. (Chairman), Fairbanks, Alaska, and Karen W. Pryor, North Bend, Washington. The third Commissioner's position was vacant. On 20 November 1987, the Senate confirmed the nominations of William W. Fox, Jr., Ph.D., Miami, Florida, to replace Ms. Pryor and Francis H. Fay, Ph.D., Fairbanks, Alaska, to fill the vacancy.

The Commission's full-time senior staff members are: John R. Twiss, Jr., Executive Director; Robert J. Hofman, Ph.D., Scientific Program Director; David W. Laist, Policy and Program Analyst; Sherburne B. Abbott, Assistant Scientific Program Director; Michael L. Gosliner, General Counsel; Marian Graham, Administrative Officer; Jeannie K. Drevenak, Staff Assistant in charge of permits; and Eileen C. Shoemaker, Staff Assistant in charge of publications. Effective 15 May 1987, the Commission accepted, with regret, the resignation of Donald C. Baur, former General Counsel, who left to enter private practice.

The Commission Chairman, with the concurrence of the other Commissioners, appoints the nine members of the Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals, a committee of scientists statutorily mandated to be knowledgeable in marine ecology and marine mammal affairs. At the end of 1987, its members

were: Robert L. Brownell, Jr., Ph.D., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Douglas G. Chapman, Ph.D., University of Washington; Joseph R. Geraci, V.M.D., Ph.D., University of Guelph; Daniel Goodman, Ph.D., Montana State University; Murray L. Johnson, M.D. (Chairman), University of Washington; Jack W. Lentfer, Alaska Environmental Consulting, Juneau, Alaska; George A. Llano, Ph.D., Naples, Florida; Jane M. Packard, Ph.D., Texas A&M University; and Forrest G. Wood, San Diego, California. On 12 April 1987, Dr. Chapman was appointed to the Committee to replace William W. Fox, Jr.

In recognition of the importance of marine mammals in the lives of many Eskimos, Indians, and Aleuts, the Commission, in 1986, asked Matthew Iya of Nome, Alaska, to serve as Special Advisor to the Marine Mammal Commission on Native Affairs. Mr. Iya continued to serve in that capacity throughout 1987.

Funding

The Marine Mammal Commission started operations during the second half of Fiscal Year (FY) 1974 and was appropriated \$412,000 for that period. Subsequent appropriations were:

FY 75:	\$750,000
FY 76:	\$900,000
FY 77:	\$1,000,000
FY 78:	\$900,000
FY 79:	\$702,000
FY 80:	\$940,000
FY 81:	\$734,000
FY 82:	\$672,000
FY 83:	\$822,000
FY 84:	\$929,000
FY 85:	\$929,000
FY 86:	\$861,000
FY 87:	\$900,000
FY 88:	\$953,000

The Report

The Annual Report of the Marine Mammal Commission is a comprehensive review of domestic and international activities affecting marine mammals. Its purpose is to provide timely information to Congress, private citizens, public interest groups, government agencies, and the international community on events of the past year. To ensure factual accuracy, drafts of the report are circulated for review amongst agencies and others involved in each described activity.

Every year, the Marine Mammal Commission devotes special attention to certain species or populations that are of particular concern. Among the thirteen species addressed in Chapter II of this Report are the West Indian manatee, the Hawaiian monk seal, the right whale, the humpback whale, the North Pacific fur seal, and the California sea otter. All have been the subject of particularly intensive work by the Commission for a number of years.

The West Indian manatee population in the southeastern United States and the Hawaiian monk seal are found only within United States waters. One can say, therefore, that their survival is entirely in the hands of those in this country. Both populations are in jeopardy because of human encroachment into sensitive areas, habitat degradation and destruction, and a variety of other threats. It is not alarmist to foresee possible extinction. For these reasons, the Commission has devoted and continues to devote substantial effort to protecting and encouraging the recovery of these species. Efforts are described in Chapter II.

Like the manatee and monk seal, right and humpback whales are also endangered, and activities of the Commission and others to establish recovery teams, develop recovery plans, and start work to implement recovery plans are discussed in Chapter II. In many cases, action has come about because of the Commission's persistence in forcing issues. In some cases, like the North Pacific fur seal, species occur only partly or seasonally in U.S. waters and continuing efforts to develop and implement cooperative international conservation programs are still needed. Other species, like the river dolphins, Hector's dolphin, and the Gulf of California harbor porpoise, are not found in U.S. waters, but are discussed here because they have become the focus of much-needed international attention. As possible, the Commission is pleased to help support measures for the protection of such species.

The most perplexing problem encountered in 1987 was the continuing die-off of bottlenose dolphins along the Atlantic coast of the United States. By the end of the year, about 500 dead animals had been recovered and extensive examinations had been made of specimen material at laboratories throughout the United States and Canada. At year's end, there was no satisfactory explanation for the deaths. A summary of activities undertaken and underway at the end of 1987 is provided in Chapter III.

Conservation of marine mammals in Alaska has been a biologically and politically difficult matter for years. Many problems may have arisen because of an unhealthy focus on bureaucratic processes rather than on the welfare of the species or populations in question. To help provide a commonly agreed

basis from which groups of differing perspectives could constructively discuss Alaskan marine mammal issues, the Commission organized and supported the preparation of species reports with research and management recommendations for ten species. The reports, the cooperative effort of many informed contributors of widely varying interests, are discussed in Chapter IV, as are a variety of other issues affecting the Native community, government agencies, and marine mammals in Alaska.

The Marine Mammal Protection Act mandates the Marine Mammal Commission's substantive involvement in international activities affecting marine mammals and their habitats. Most species and populations with which the Commission is concerned are wide-ranging and their conservation requires cooperative international efforts. While some issues of international concern are discussed in Chapter II, "Species of Special Concern," those involving formal international agreements are reviewed in Chapter V.

One such issue is the Antarctic. Since its inception, the Marine Mammal Commission has been deeply involved in issues that could affect marine mammals in the Antarctic. It was instrumental in developing U.S. positions during negotiations of the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources and continues to play a significant role with regard to the ongoing negotiation of a regime to govern mineral activities in the Antarctic. These actions are discussed in Chapter V.

Since the Marine Mammal Commission became operational in 1974, its representatives have participated in activities of the International Whaling Commission and its Scientific Committee. As discussed in Chapter V, activities of particular importance this past year were efforts to determine what should be included in the comprehensive assessment of whale stocks to be undertaken by 1990, and efforts by certain countries to conduct whaling for scientific purposes in an apparent attempt to circumvent the moratorium on commercial whaling which began in 1986. Also discussed in Chapter V are activities related to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and the Cartagena Convention.

The Marine Mammal Commission called attention to entanglement of marine mammals in marine debris and plastic pollution as major environmental issues within the United States in the early 1980s. As part of its effort, the Commission recommended that an international workshop on the fate and impact of marine debris be held and provided the seed money and terms of reference for that workshop. Since that workshop in 1984, the Commission has continued to focus attention on this problem, both domestically and internationally. This past year was particularly important because of progress made by the National