

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES: PROGRESS REPORT ON CETACEAN CATCHES AND RESEARCH, MAY 2001 TO APRIL 2002

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1.0 Species and stocks studied

Common name	Scientific Name
Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaenglia</i>
Various small cetacean species - see below	

The Cetacean fishery has a long tradition of social and economic importance in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In the 19th century, this fishery was the most important of all fisheries. In 1868, whale oil ranked fourth in the value of exports from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, behind sugar, rum and arrowroot starch. A number of cetacean species are currently harvested in the coastal waters, among them are humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*), pilot whale (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*), orca (*Orcinus orcus*), Atlantic spotted dolphin (*Stenella frontalis*) and others.

There is a small but active fishery for cetacean centered around Barrouallie on the West Coast of St. Vincent. While the fishery targets primarily pilot whales and bottlenose dolphins, other small cetaceans are captured as well. All species of small cetaceans are targeted. The primary purpose of the fishery is the production of meat and oil. Harvesting is conducted from small open wooden boats termed whalers, which are powered by outboard engines and oars. The cetaceans are taken both by hand harpoons and small harpoon guns deployed from a tripod stand fixed on the bow of the boat.

The Bequia whale fishery targets humpback whales. Harvesting is conducted from small open wooden whaling boats as in Barrouallie, but the whaleboats of Bequia do not use motors. The hand thrust harpoon designed for taking large whales are used to strike the whale. Hand hand lances and darting guns are employed to kill the whales. The skill of the harpooners is such that the darting gun is seldom necessary to accomplish a rapid kill. The Aboriginal Whalers in Bequia were limited to a quota of two whales per annum through the 2001/2002 season, during which the quota of two humpback whales was taken before the end of March.

2.0 Sightings data

Survey in St. Vincent & the Grenadines and Grenada.

1) Date of surveys conducted:

a) Survey in St. Vincent & the Grenadines and Grenada: 19-22 March, 2001.

b) Survey off west coast of St. Vincent Island: 23 March, 2001.

2) Research vessel: "Black Jack" of Fisheries Division, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, a small longline fishing vessel.

3) Participants: Raymond Ryan, a captain and 4 crew (Fisheries Division of St. Vincent the Grenadines).

Paul Phillip and Crafton Isaac (Fisheries Division of Grenada).

Hideyoshi Yoshida (The Institute of Cetacean Research, Japan).

4) Summary of results.

a) Survey in St. Vincent & the Grenadines and Grenada.

Track lines were placed in coastal waters shallower than 100 m in depth, surrounding the Grenadines and Grenada. On east side of the Grenadines, sea condition was very rough due to heavy swell from the Atlantic, thus we could not search the lines in the waters. A total of 175.0 n.m. (primary searching distance was 63.4 n.m.) were searched, in which only a school of bottlenose dolphins were sighted.

b) Survey in off west coast of St. Vincent Island.

Searching was conducted for track lines placed within 6 n.m. off the west coast of St. Vincent Island. Sea condition was not so bad. However, we could obtain no sightings of cetaceans during the 51.7 n.m. searching (primary searching distance was 41.1 n.m.).

3.0 Marking data

Photographs were obtained of the two whales landed at the shore station on Petit Nevis. The photographs of the fluke of the larger of the two whales along with fluke photographs from whales taken 2000 and 2001 are being forwarded to the NAH Photo ID database at College of the Atlantic for comparison with the database for the North Atlantic.

4.0 Tissues and biological samples collected

Tissue samples are routinely obtained from all whales taken. These are sent to the laboratory of Dr. Goto in Japan for analysis and then the profiles will be sent to the Laboratory of Dr Palsboll in USA for comparison with DNA profiles from other NAH. Difficulty issuing CITES permits for the transfer of the samples to Japan has delayed the project, but results for all samples through the 2002 take should have been analyzed and compared before the next meeting of the Scientific Committee.

5.0 Pollution studies

None.

6.0 Statistics for large whales

On March 27th, 2002, two humpback whales (*Megaptera novaenglia*) were taken some 3 - 3.5 miles south southwest of Mustique by the local aboriginal whalers. These whalers were led by Orson Ollivierre. One small and one large whale were struck at approximately 10:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m., respectively. They were towed to the landing station in Petit Nevis, where they were secured at approximately 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. on the said day. Processing (flensing) of the small animal commenced at 2:00 p.m. on March 27, 2002 while processing of the large animal began at 6:00 am on the 28th March 2002. The whole operation was conducted very efficiently and all useable meat was recovered without spoilage. Harvesting and biological information (including tissue samples for DNA analysis) were collected by the Fisheries Division. This information is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Information collected by the Fisheries Division are as follows:

ADULT ANIMAL	
Parameter	
Time taken	11:00 a.m.
Length*	55ft
Girth at Flipper	27ft
Diameter/Tail span	15 ft
Sex	Female
Lactating	No
Vessel type	Whaler
Landing station	Petit Nevis
Location of harvest	3.5 miles SSW of Mustique
Method of killing	Hand-thrown harpoon
*The lengths of the whales were taken from the upper jaw to the tail, straight line measurement.	
SMALL ANIMAL	
Parameter	
Time taken	10:00 a.m.

Length*	28ft
Girth of flipper	12.2ft
Sex	Male
Vessel type	Whaler
Location of harvest	3 miles SSW of Mustique
Landing station	Petit Nevis
Method of killing	Hand-thrown harpoon
Stomach content	No milk present

7.0 Statistics for small cetaceans

Records are maintained at the Fisheries Division offices and laboratory in Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, West Indies.

8.0 Strandings and other studies

None reported for large whales.

9.0 Publications

Dr. Hisashi Hamaguchi published the results of his studies of the Bequian whale fishery. See: Hamaguchi, H. 2001. *Bequia Whaling Revisited*. Sonoda Journal. 36: 41-57

10.0 Literature cited

N/A