

WHALING POLICY

IN RELATION TO ANIMAL WELFARE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Did you know that before commercial whaling started, the existing population of blue whales filtered 6.6 million trees worth of carbon dioxide from our atmosphere each year?

Whales are highly beneficial for the environment and initiate natural processes that aid us with environmental problems like carbon sequestration. They are directly responsible for the existence of hundreds of species and contribute to the fight against climate change by cleansing our air and providing us with oxygen.

When talking about marine mammals, whaling might be a topic that comes to mind. It has long been the primary cause to blame in regard to climate change and the steady extinction of our large marine mammals. Whaling and its morals are a very controversial topic and there are many different factors that play a deciding role in the discussion.

It is important to distinguish between commercial and aboriginal whaling. Commercial whaling was the foundation of the industrial revolution but is now an outdated way of farming resources. It is harmful to whale stocks and especially in our time an unreliable source of income. Contrarily, aboriginal whaling provides a vital food resource and cultural identity for marginal communities as it has always played an important role in their culture and daily life. And since their hunting activity is not deteriorating whale stocks and is relatively environmentally friendly as well, there is objectively no need to prohibit these hunts.

Whaling is a topic about which there is a lot of misinformation on the internet, making it difficult to distinguish between scientific facts and public arguments. My goal in this work was to provide a broad and diverse source of information to motivate people to investigate this topic and form their own opinions about it. My paper is a collection and connection of various scientific sources and traces the history of whaling and whale protection. It explains the biological and ecological impact of whaling on the environment and how whale hunting is perceived by the public.



Killing of Belugas in Greenland, Photo by M.P.Heide-Jørgensen (GINR)

Before I studied this topic, I wasn't fully aware of the connection between whaling and climate change. But I came to realize just how closely interlinked these two topics are. All these processes that take place in a whale's life are already impressive but the difference they make for the environment is enormous. I would never have thought that whales are indirectly responsible for providing us with the oxygen for almost every second breath we take.

Throughout the process of researching and writing my thesis my viewpoints changed a lot and I often had to overcome opinions I abided by for many years because I believed them to be the truth. Working on this paper and spending time at the marine research station Mériscope gave me a lot of perspective and one thing that has become more and more prominent is that we really do need to be more active for both the environment and marine life in general. Because whales are animals worth saving.

By Leandra Wyss, supervised by Jacqueline Egger
Kantonsschule Hohe Promenade Zürich

