

Swimming to Utopia

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Welcome to the Cetacean Nation

The relationship between cetaceans and humans has been in the news lately. Much of it is discouraging. While many people work hard to free orcas from oceanaria in Florida and San Diego, boaters are increasingly crowding Puget Sound's resident orcas away from their fast-dwindling food supply. In Baja, Mitsubishi finally decides under pressure not to mine salt in one of the gray whales last unspoiled breeding grounds.

These issues may seem unrelated, although they indirectly address the recently proposed concept of The Cetacean Nation. I begin this essay with a general critique of that proposal. Then comes the proposal itself as conceived by its promoters.

As always, the visionary relationship humans have with cetaceans provides a harbinger of how we should be relating to all of nature. When you finish reading the proposal below, read it again in a week or a month, but this time swap grizzly bear, or green turtle, or trumpeter swan for every reference made here to cetaceans.

One.

The concept of a cetacean "nation" was originally conceived in 1961 by Dr. John Lilly, subsequently advocated in the 1970's by Jacques Cousteau and Greenpeace, and promoted in the 1990's by Scott Taylor of the Cetacean Studies Institute of Santa Fe.

Cetaceans hold a unique power over the human imagination. What other family of animals has a human abolition movement fighting for its freedom, as captive dolphins do? What other animals have their own commando police force (Sea Shepherd Society) willing to place life and ships at risk to uphold international wildlife laws? What other family of animals can prompt a multi-million dollar industry founded on the premise of people simply watching them move through their field of vision?

Placed in this context, the idea of the cetacean nation seems no more extraordinary than the mobilization of human resources that has developed all over the world to save the whales during the past twenty years. The success of that movement suggests that we may be already halfway towards the establishment of a cetacean nation.

The political resolve that sustained the worldwide save-the-whale movement will never be able to rest until cetaceans are granted some unique political status that insures their sanctuary in perpetuity. Given the fact that realpolitik consistently grants resource incentives a precedence over the environment, what better way to absolutely assure the cetaceans' right to life than to grant them the status of a United Nations protectorate? Until that happens, whalers and whale lovers will continue to push and pull like two immovable forces responding to one another in a way reminiscent of the military stalemate on the North Korea border. Ironically, the UN has long kept the peace at that beleaguered

border.

The cetacean nation is much more than a political proposal. It serves as an apt metaphor for the growing environmental dream that envisions the human community respecting and honoring nature as more than a resource. The eventual success or failure of the concept offers all of us a barometer to measure the vision and compassion that our own species must attain if the natural world is to survive intact into the next century. The cetacean nation gives us all a glimpse of the politics of the seventh generation.

The Cetacean Nation Manifesto's promotion of captive dolphins seems both counterproductive and troubling. Scott Taylor has responded to my criticism in this way. All capitols are his:

"There is no escaping the fact that there are domesticated Dolphins among us now. More research, done in an enlightened way in appropriate facilities, by carefully trained and screened people is what I'd like to see. I'm convinced this is possible. It will take major investment by a visionary to set up a beautiful facility with every consideration taken for the Dolphins who now live among us. We owe it to ourselves and the dreams of the Dolphins as we know them, to take our relationship to them seriously, to take full responsibility for them as sentient beings with inalienable rights. Dolphin Assisted Therapy is one area that will produce some astonishing breakthroughs in the near future. "

In that light, Taylor seems not so much a promoter of holding dolphins captive in concrete pools for reasons of "research", but a seeker after something new—an as yet undefined situation where humans can easily interact with cetaceans.

Both John Lilly and Scott Taylor have told me that the kind of project Interspecies Inc. designed and implemented for The Human-Dolphin Foundation in Careyes Mexico in the early 1980's is their ideal situation. In that case, IC spent five months playing live music out on the ocean at a specific locale at a certain time of day, for a set duration. Six spotted dolphins eventually came to us at that place and at that time, instigating games and music-making experiments of their own.

One note about the manifesto as presented here. I have taken some liberty editing it for flow. Read on and imagine.

Two.

The Cetacean Nation

by Dr. John Lilly, Scott Taylor and Jim Nollman

The concept of human rights has slowly developed over the last few centuries. Many of the rights we enjoy in the United States today have been further defined and codified as laws. History teaches that our rights evolved through several stages:

- The unconscious acceptance of a lack of rights
- The conscious awareness of the need for adequate expression of rights
- The formulation and definition of fundamental rights
- The establishment of governmental and legislative structures by which rights become protected through law. As individuals learned through experience that they did not always share the benefits of laws, they developed the means to make their cause heard.

This same situation can now be seen reflected in the lives of cetaceans. Recognized as having brains which are in some ways more biologically complex than humans, and possessing social structures as sophisticated as human culture, the question arises: should cetaceans be given rights under human laws?

The future of many species of whales and dolphins is in question. The Baiji, or Yangtze River Dolphin, the Vaquita found in the Sea of Cortez, and the North Pacific Right Whale are but a few species who are close to extinction as a result of human activity. To ensure the survival of

the cetaceans in light of the continuing onslaught by human beings, it is essential that they be recognized for what they truly are: non-terrestrial intelligent life forms.

Indeed, cetaceans have the same inherent rights that human beings have to survive and to live in peace. To attain this goal, it is essential that the cetaceans are recognized by human society as the intelligent life forms they are. It is with this goal in mind that a Cetacean Nation is now being initiated.

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Purpose

- To foster greater understanding of the minds and consciousness of whales and dolphins
- To develop methods and technologies to enhance interspecies communications between humans and cetaceans. This includes acoustic technologies, a better understanding of echolocation as the basis of holographic sound communications, and the potential for human-dolphin mind connections
- 3. To gain recognition from the international human community of the inalienable rights of cetaceans, especially freedom from intrusion and specicide by humans.

That these goals may be achieved in time to ensure the preservation of most species of whales and dolphins, a series of endeavors should be initiated. This involves a recognition of the need for Cetacean Nation representation in human political and industrial society.

The process starts by obtaining signed statements of support from Non-Governmental Organizations supporting the general recognition of Cetacean representation in the human world. It also includes the organizing of electronic databases, libraries and international forums for the advancement of communication studies between human beings and cetaceans. We must begin to promote—via the mass media— current information on the technologies, techniques of existing and past projects whose purpose enhances human/cetacean understanding and communications.

The goal is to have cetaceans represented as a nation within the framework of the United Nations. This goal will most likely be fully achieved once consistent communication links with any one of the many species of whales or dolphins has been established.

Validation

Validation of this cetacean political status within the United Nations as well as among the general public involves:

- Recognition by individual human beings of the need for eventual cetacean representation at the United Nations and other global forums.
- Gaining recognition, via letters and endorsements for the Cetacean Nation from non-governmental organizations and other geopolitical groups.
- Gaining non-governmental organization status for the Cetacean Nation, initially represented by human beings as spokespeople
- Recognition within human governments and within international conferences and forums for the need to explore and research the possible methods of establishing consistent communications with cetaceans so that they may receive the recognition of deserved status.
- Recognition and validation of the Cetacean Nation through the passage of resolutions at international conventions, conferences, or similar forums.
- Recognition, via letter or other endorsements, from one or more member countries within the United Nations for such representation.
- Recognition of cetacean species as a nation and a separate group of intelligent, sentient

beings that should be afforded the fundamental rights to survival and happiness in keeping with those afforded human beings in modern democratic societies.

Goals

This seven step plan is achievable provided there is sufficient interest and support from human beings who wish to accomplish these goals on behalf of cetaceans. To initiate this global endeavor, the wide base of dolphin communications studies needs to be consolidated and compiled in such a manner that all researchers and laypeople have easy access to the developments in cetacean communications that have occurred over the past 30 years. The Human/Dolphin Foundation library of information and materials is being consolidated, along with libraries of information garnered from others who have also engaged in cetacean communications projects and endeavors. This research and information includes:

- scientific research papers, video, film and still photographic images of cetacean activities.
- Various Media that demonstrates cetacean/human interactions via music, audio tapes and other acoustic mediums.
- Proven and possible usage of existing and future communication technologies.
- Anecdotal accounts of human/cetacean communications through physical and telepathic means.
- Other cetacean communication research, observations, information and materials.

Many of the current cetacean-human communication efforts are limited in their scope, due to their limitations in information availability. The result is that many of the people who are developing new technologies, methods and strategies for human-cetacean communications are unaware of the advances and results being made by others.

For example, Louis Herman's students working on captive dolphin studies at Kewalo Basin Hawaii periodically publish scientific research papers on their communications studies. Yet these papers are seldom read by others who are conducting musical or acoustic interaction, or who are developing communications and interactions via swimming with cetaceans in the ocean. There are also people who are working towards engaging in mind connections with dolphins and whales, who are unaware or do not know how to access information pertaining to acoustical, visual and cue-based communications at oceanariums. Moreover, many of these researchers working with captive animals are unaware of the methods of communication that have been implemented and used by nonscientists.

In order to expedite the needed breakthroughs in human-cetacean communications, reduce duplication of efforts, as well as develop consistent communications with cetaceans, human promoters of the Cetacean Nation need to

- Compile and organize existing information from the United States, Europe, Russia, Australia and other parts of the world where cetacean communications studies have been conducted
- Create an electronic database for easy access worldwide so that those wishing to access the existing human knowledge on cetacean communications can do so from their own countries with relative ease
- Organize forums and study groups of cetacean researchers and interspecies communications enthusiasts so as to determine the best steps towards establishing consistent human cetacean communications links.

For more info email us at: beluga@interspecies.com.

If this essay motivates you to learn more, Check out [The Cetacean Nation Website](#)