



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### WHALING INDUSTRY, 1937-40

Developments of many aspects of the whale and whaling in world history, preface complete tables on production of United States whalers in all waters, 1937-40, in a new bulletin, Whales-2, "A History of Whaling with Resume of the Whaling Industry of the United States, 1937-40", released today by the Fish and Wildlife Service of the United States Department of the Interior.

The bulletin traces whaling from the day when 12th century Basque altar dip lamps first burned whale oil, through 1846—when 735 American vessels pursued whales—to September 24, 1931, the day when 26 great maritime powers became signatories to a Convention whose purpose was to regulate the industry. It also includes latest statistics of catch.

Written by Talbott Denmead, Chief, and Esther E. Dodd, Law Enforcement Division, the bulletin outlines the relation of whaling to the economic history of the old and new worlds. It presents a history of often repeated hardship, success and failure, without parallel in the annals of any other industry—"with its final chapter yet to be written".

Residents along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea were first to realize the value of the whale as a commodity. Finding vast quantities of oil in the carcass

of a whale which had been washed ashore, they used it to light the dip lamps of their holy worship services. Thus--about the 12th century--began the important shore-whaling industry of the Basques.

The whale of commerce--from the time of the Basques until many years later--was the right whale. This was due to its ease of capture and because of the abundance of oil produced. The sperm whale did not come into prominence until the beginning of the 18th century when the New England colonists began fishing for it in the open sea.

Just one hundred years ago--in 1840--the peak of the world whale fishery was reached. At that time more than 800 vessels were engaged in the industry, of which nearly 600 were American. The American fleet, however, did not reach its peak until about 1846 when its whalers numbered approximately 735.

The invention of the harpoon gun in 1868, together with the air pump for inflating dead whales so that they would float instead of sinking after killing, and the replacement of frail rowboats by vessels propelled by steam, completely revolutionized the whaling industry. Now it was possible for expeditions to go farther from home in a shorter time, as well as to capture the large finback, blue, sei and humpback whales.

"Eminent conservationists and leaders in the whaling industry", according to the authors, "realized as early as 1925 that the methods employed by the whalers of the 20th century would result in the annual destruction of an enormous number of these mammals, one of the most valuable of the world's natural resources, and eventually wipe out the stock if they were not afforded protection through international regulation. They were aware of the fact that immediate waste was occurring through glutting of the markets of both Europe and the United States."

From resulting conferences and years of research came the Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, signed at Geneva, September 24, 1931, of which 26 maritime powers were signatories, including the United States. This was given effect in the United States through an enabling act, known as The Whaling Treaty Act of May 1, 1936.

The Convention and the Act, together with the subsequent London Agreement (proclaimed by the President on May 18, 1938), the Protocol (proclaimed by the President on April 8, 1939), and the Regulations of March 18, 1940, now prohibit the taking of any species of whale for sport at any time or at any place. Size limits have been adopted on species that may be taken commercially, immature whales, suckling calves, and females accompanied by calves may not be killed, whaling in certain areas is restricted, and in other areas prohibited altogether; the operation of factory ships limited in certain instances, while concessions (reduced size limits on blue, finback and sperm whales) have been made for land stations using the meat of blue, finback and sperm whales for local consumption as human or animal food. Whaling stations (ship and shore) and craft serving them must be licensed.

That part of The Whaling Treaty Act relating to issuing licenses, collecting, examining and reporting on statistical and biological data on the catch is administered by the Secretary of the Interior, while the United States Coast Guard enforces the Act.

Whales-2, a 30-page bulletin, is available for free distribution upon application to the Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D. C.

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