



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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MODERN MOBY DICKS PREPARE BOATS FOR WHALING SEASON

Twentieth Century Moby Dicks are getting ready for their next excursion to the whaling grounds off northern California so that America may enjoy a variety of products ranging from perfumes and soaps to animal food. The last of the great American whalers recently received a license to operate a shore station at Humboldt Bay, California. Recommended by the Fish and Wildlife Service, the license was approved by Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes.

A century ago, the American whaling fleet was the largest in the world, and as many as 600 of the 800 whaling vessels in the world at that time sailed under the Stars and Stripes.

Today, the San Francisco company which received the shore station license is the only whaling concern in the United States. A whaling company in British Columbia is the only other one of its type operating in North America. According to reports the Canadian whalers also plan to take to the sea this year.

The whalers' hunting grounds are usually within a radius of approximately 150 miles from the land station.

Whale fat is processed into oil, which in America is used primarily in the manufacture of soaps. It is also used in perfumes, as a base for face creams and

fruit tree and fly sprays, as a lubricant for machinery, and in the treating of leather. In Germany whale oil is used as a shortening replacing lard. The meat of the sea mammals is used for cat and dog foods in the United States, but in Japan it is used for human consumption.

Last year the American whalers caught 29 whales--6 finbacks, 19 humpbacks, and 4 sperm whales. A 70-foot finback was the largest catch of the season, most of the other sea mammals measuring on an average between 50 and 60 feet in length.

In 1939, the same whaling company caught 61 whales.

The world catch last year was estimated to be 35,000, most of the whales being taken from the Antarctic by English, Norwegian, and Japanese whalers.

There are about 19 kinds of larger whales known, but not all are hunted. Of the two general types of whales, only baleen whales have the whalebone. Popular during the 1800's because of the widespread use of whalebones and whale oil, the baleen whale population was rapidly depleted. The invention of the harpoon gun in 1868 increased the take of whales and led, eventually, to the decline both in the total number of whales and the number of whaling boats employed in the industry.

Today it is estimated that some species of whales are close to extinction and that many are badly depleted in numbers. How many whales there are is difficult to estimate, and no reliable figures are available. Authorities like Dr. Remington Kellogg, of the U. S. National Museum, however, are certain that the whales are being taken at too rapid a rate.

An international agreement, signed by 26 maritime powers who agreed on important conservation measures for whales, came into effect in 1935. The killing of calves and immature whales and females accompanied by calves was prohibited. Full protection was given to all kinds of right whales.

Under the terms of the license issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service, the American whalers can seek the big sea mammals for 6 consecutive months.