

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

For Release Thursday, June 10, 1971

Sayre 343-5634

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE BIOLOGY OF WHALES BEING HELD THIS WEEK NEAR WASHINGTON, D.C.

An effort to pinpoint the critical gaps in the biological data on whale populations--and to point the way toward the international research necessary to fill these gaps--is the purpose of an International Conference on the Biology of Whales, scheduled for June 10-12 at Skyland, Shenandoah National Park, Luray, Va.

The meeting has been jointly organized by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Smithsonian Institution, New York Zoological Society, and the International Biological Program (IBP). Also contributing to its financial support are: the U.S. Department of Commerce; the National Science Foundation; the National Audubon Society; the Environmental Defense Fund; the World Wildlife Fund; the National Wildlife Federation; and the Conservation Foundation.

The Marine Mammal Council of the IBP has been asked by the organizers to arrange and conduct the meeting and subsequently to edit a report for publication.

The conference resulted from action by the Department of the Interior adding eight species of great whales to the Endangered Species List, thereby prohibiting the importation of any parts or products of these animals into the United States. At that time, the Department called for a meeting of leading scientists "to review what can be done to restore whale populations in the world's oceans."

Nearly 40 leading marine mammalogists, biometricians, and conservationists are expected to attend the meeting to join in a thorough examination of the problem. The conference will include participants from the United States, Canada, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Norway, the Soviet Union, Japan, Australia, South Africa, Chile, and Uruguay. In addition, several interested scientific and conservation organizations and U.S. Government agencies have been invited to send observers. To insure that full and candid discussions can take place, the meeting will otherwise be closed.

The conference will review available biological data on whales in order to recommend future studies. While summaries of whale population data will be included, it is not the purpose of the meeting to present vast amounts of basic data already available in the technical publications of the International Whaling Commission and elsewhere. Neither will the conference be concerned with the legal aspects of protection, utilization, and enforcement. The meeting is an attempt to bring up to date all information on the status of whales. The program will also include discussions of both traditional and new techniques for gathering data.

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