Whaling

Whales are amazing creatures. They can hold their breath for more than one hour at a time. Certain species of whales can grow to be over one hundred feet long. These aquatic mammals communicate with each other vocally using complex ‘songs’. Sadly the population of nearly every species of whale is declining rapidly due to commercial, scientific, and in some cases aboriginal whaling.

In the year 1986 the International Whaling Commission set in place a moratorium on all commercial whaling with the exception of whaling done for scientific purposes. Despite this whaling ban the population of whales is still declining. This is due to illegal and scientific whaling. Records show a dramatic drop in the population of whales in recent years. Blue Whales are less than one percent of their original population, and there are an estimated one hundred Pacific Grey Whales left in the world. Experts believe that if whaling is not stopped soon that many species of whales will go extinct.

There are exceptions to the IWC’s whaling ban. Aboriginal whaling or whaling that is done for cultural reasons is still allowed although it will be halted if the population of indigenous whales drops to dangerously low levels. Another exception to the ban, scientific whaling, was coined by Japan in the year nineteen eighty seven one year after the moratorium was imposed. Scientific whaling allows for whales to be killed for scientific research. It is the belief of many that Japan continues commercially hunt whales under the protection of this loophole.

Since the moratorium took effect in nineteen eighty six there has been pressure to lift the ban. This pressure has come mainly from countries that claim that they have a cultural right to hunt whales such as Japan and more recently Iceland. Most whaling today is done in the Antarctic and is done illegally or under the ploy that it is being done for scientific purposes. After various DNA and autopsy like tests are completed the whale carcass is usually sold for food and in increasingly rare cases for oil.

The population of whales rapidly is declining because of their continued hunting despite bans that have been put in place by the International Whaling Commission or the IWC. Nearly all whaling that takes place today is done illegally or for ‘scientific purposes’. The population of some whales has decreased so much that there could be as little as three hundred and fifty whales of that species left. If commercial whaling is not stopped in the near future many species of whales will be extinct.