

TROPIC NEWS

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL
RESOURCES

DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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State of the World 1996

"The State of the World 1996" is an annual desktop reference used throughout the world. With all the political and media confusion about environmental issues, do we really know what is going on with our atmosphere, agriculture, oceans and rivers?

State of the World 1996 answers "yes" with global research and analysis that confirms what many have known for some time:

The global economy is destroying the source of its wealth, the earth's ecosystems. Problems in fisheries, climate change, food supply and population are beginning to interact, magnifying the damage.

A few of the findings are quite disturbing:

- World population growth of 1.6% a year requires an additional 78,000 metric tons of grain per day just to maintain current consumption per person.

- More than thirty new diseases have been identified since 1973, many related to climate change, development, and increased human mobility.

- Our failure to stabilize world population before hitting the limits of oceanic fisheries means we face a declining catch per person for as far as we can see into the future.

The State of the World 1996 also discusses trends and recommendations that show us that we can back away from ecological destruction. Some of the more positive issues include:

- The international success of phasing out CFC production is a model for halting carbon emissions.

- A solar/hydrogen energy system can supply all the energy needs of a modern industrial society.

A glance through State of the World 1996 shows the key global findings that identify the damage we are doing to our planet.

This publication is available through the Worldwatch Institute, 1776 Mass. Ave., NW Washington, DC 20036-1904 \$11.95 per copy.

Quote

"We cannot discover new oceans unless we have the courage to lose sight of the shore."

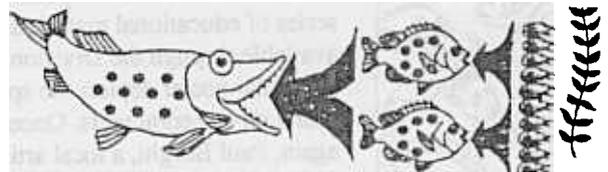
- Anonymous

Moving down the food chain

Overfishing has depleted many species of fish in the deep water region off New England and Canada that was once one of the most fertile fishing grounds. Some areas are so depleted of fish that the federal government imposed an unprecedented emergency fishing closure in 1994. The story is the same the world over.

There are too many large vessels using too efficient equipment, catching far too many fish for the fish populations to sustain themselves. Factory trawlers the size of football fields are equipped with satellites, sonar, massive nets, and refrigerator-freezers often aided by spotter planes, and capable of bringing in 550,000 pounds of fish in a single day.

The turn to squid is an early sign of a trend that some fear could become another fisheries crisis; the overfishing of species that other fish depend on for food. The fishing industry calls these species "bait" fish, and it is a universal truism that where there is no bait, there are no fish.



Unless the trend is somehow reversed, a shortfall of some 30 million tons of fish for human diet is foreseen by the year 2000, and the Worldwatch Institute projects a future in which a majority of the 15 to 21 million people in the world who fish for a living are out of work.

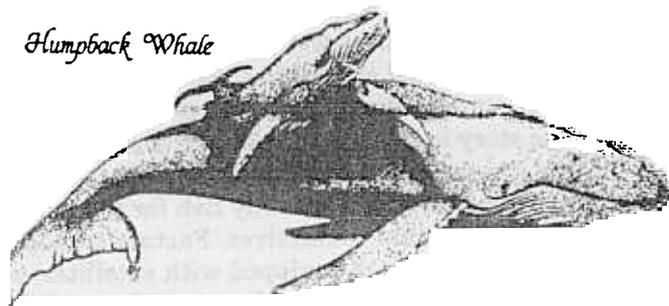
Another disturbing issue involves the increasing numbers of emaciated harbor porpoises and seals ending up either beached or entangled in nearshore gill nets. Common belief is that the animals are coming inshore in a desperate search for food - and overfishing is one of the reasons. It is believed that the change in feeding habits of these animals is based in part or in whole on the lack of available food due to the commercial fisheries.

From sport anglers to owners of factory trawlers, those who fish the waters of the north Atlantic are an independent lot. But if there is one thing they all have in common, surely it is an interest in preventing a crash in squid populations. This task is the responsibility of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. The Council has proposed to curtail the influx of new squid boats, by limiting the fishery to those who have been taking squid for many years already.

The proceeding was summarized from an article by Dick Russell entitled, "Fishing down the food chain"

Humpback whales are coming back

We should start seeing humpback whales in our waters again as they make their annual migration south to calve in the warmer Caribbean. Some whales may already have calves with them but calves are more commonly seen in February and March as the whales head north again to food rich waters. They are more frequently seen off the north shores of our islands in pairs or groups up to six or eight. The sight of a 40 to 50 foot whale



Humpback Whale

breaching (projecting its body up out of the water) is spectacular. Any sightings of these or any other whales should be reported to the Division.



Now Available REEF FISH OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS poster. This will be the seventh poster in a series of educational materials available through the Division. This particular poster depicts the species found on our coral reefs. Once again, Paul Borghi, a local artist, has done a remarkable job.

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Trees were saved by printing on recycled paper

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Address Correction Requested

New Saltpond Brochure Available



Our latest brochure "SALTPONDS: Nature's Water Pollution Prevention System" is now available at both Division offices. This brochure is the tenth in a series of brochures addressing environmental issues.

The brochure defines saltponds, discusses the various life forms found at saltponds and points out the importance of this particular habitat.

Saltponds in the Virgin Islands are an endangered habitat. Many of our activities have eliminated them or reduced their value as sediment traps or wildlife habitats.

The brochure also discusses ways to protect this unique environment. If we overload our saltponds with too much sediment or pollution, they will eventually stop working for us.

Without functioning saltponds, many of our marine resources -- reefs, seagrasses, fish, and birds -- will be in danger.



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