

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

### BRIAN J. ROTHSCILD

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the California Gray Whale Workshop. The Workshop is being held in a significant location and at a particularly appropriate time.

The location, La Jolla, is of course, quite near the area surveyed as part of the well-known California gray whale census and is also a focal region for other studies on the dynamics and life history of the California gray whale. Some of this research will be presented at this Workshop where you will hear about such diverse topics as husbandry, respiration and metabolism, cardiovascular physiology and blood studies and behavior and physiology — all related to the California gray whale.

In addition to being a region where many contemporary studies on the gray whale have been undertaken, it was also in this general area of the North American coast that Charles M. Scammon, whaler and sometime

captain in the U.S. Revenue Marine, undertook his early studies of the natural history of the gray whale. His studies "The Marine Mammals of the North-Western Coast of North America," were published in 1874. Many of Captain Scammon's observations on the gray whale were made in the mid-1850's when he discovered a major nursery ground of the California gray whale in a Baja California embayment, Laguna Ojo de Liebre, now frequently called Scammon's Lagoon. Scammon was also involved in the early, intensive harvest of this species, an activity that was terminated in 1946 when the International Whaling Commission declared the gray whale a protected species.

The timing of this symposium is also appropriate. There is now an unprecedented interest in marine mammals. TV, radio, motion pictures, newspapers and magazines have all contributed to a growing public awareness and concern with these fascinating animals. Unfortunately, this deluge of publicity has resulted in a mixture of fact and fiction. The fiction has been further fed by various

indiscriminate interpretations which often accompany events of high publicity value, inadequate data collection, and difficulties in interpreting the sparse marine mammal data. Further complications arise from conflicting and contradictory views of special interest groups that influence resource decisions. A case in point is, of course, the blue whale.

Because this is also a time when significant policy and conservation decisions are being made on marine mammals, it is particularly important to concentrate on the generation of factual information. The conservation of our resources is essentially a decision-making process; this process can only be effective if decision-makers are supplied with appropriate facts. Workshops such as this California Gray Whale Workshop will do much to contribute to our understanding and knowledge of marine mammals and assist in making better resource decisions which hopefully will preserve these Leviathans for the education and enjoyment of future generations.

I think Herman Melville had a premonition that all of this would come to pass; that status of marine mammal stocks would be of world concern and as a small part of this concern we would be holding our workshop. In fact he could be before you now saying, as he did in *Moby Dick*:

"Already we are boldly launched upon the deep; but soon we shall be lost in its unshored, harborless immensities. Ere that come to pass; ere the Pequod's weedy hull rolls side by side with the barnacled hulls of the Leviathan; at the outset it is but well to attend to a matter almost indispensable to a thorough appreciative understanding of the more special leviathanic revelations and allusions of all sorts which are to follow.

It is some systematized exhibition of the whale in his broad genera, that I would now fain put before you. Yet is it no easy task. The classification of the constituents of a chaos, nothing less is here essayed. Listen to what the best and latest authorities have laid down . . ."

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