Undeniable truths about the seal hunt

The seal hunt throughout the world

- **Seal hunt is important for coastal communities around the globe. We hunt seal practically everywhere we find these populations: Australia, Namibia, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Russia, Norway, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom, Iceland, Greenland, the United States and, of course, in Canada where seal hunt can represent up to 35 % of the total incomes of a household. (http://sealsandsealing.net/resources.php?page=8)**

Seal Management

- **The North Atlantic Harp seal population has more than quadrupled since the seventies and is today over abundant. According to the specialists of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), his number would be around 8 millions. (http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/seal-phoque/faq-eng.htm)**
- **The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the most important and respectable organism of conservation in the world, supports the sustainable use of seals and other wild animals, provided that their populations are abounding, what is definitely the case with the Harp seal since IUCN reserves to him his lowest worry rating: "least concern". http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/41671/0**
- **The grey seal population shares this rating since its population exploded from 10 000 in the 60's in more than 350 000 today (http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/csas-sccs/Publications/SAR-AS/2010/2010_071-eng.html , 3nd point), threatening with the fragile balance of the ecosystem of the Gulf of Saint-Lawrence. On the page 31 of its report, the Seal Predation Working Group highly recommends to reduce the population of grey seal by half to allow the threaten fish stocks to recover. (http://www.glf.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/folios/00157/docs/seal_predation_working_group_repor-eng.pdf)**

Animal Welfare

- **In 1986, the Malouf Commission pointed out that 38 of 40 veterinary surgeons having scrutinized the seal hunt concluded that the activity was conducted according to the best available hunting methods and avoided useless suffering to the animal *(Malouf, A. 1986. Les phoques et la chasse aux phoques au Canada. Rapport de la Commission Royale, vol. 3, Approvisionnements et Services Canada, Ottawa (Ontario), note 2 de 40).***

- **In 2002, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association also analysed the hunting methods (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC339547/?tool=pmcentrez) just to get to the same conclusions.**

Impacts on the ecosystem

- **Conservative figures estimate the consumption of the each Harp seal to be around a tonne per year. (http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/seal-phoque/seal_hunt-chasse_phoque-eng.htm) The population being around 8 millions, they believe the total consumption would go up to 9 000 000 of tons of fish and seafood per year.**

- **Being twice as big, the grey seal, eats about twice that amount (http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/csas-sccs/Publications/SAR-AS/2010/2010_071-eng.html , 10th point). Therefore, he eats about double that amount for a total of about 700 000 tons a year for that specie only.**

- **These two combined populations consumes around 10 000 000 tons of food in the ecosystem of the Gulf of Saint-Lawrence while, in 2008, the entire of fishing fleet in this area caught less than 2.3 % of this figure, that is 223 973 tonnes. (Source : Golfe et hors-golfe Saint-Laurent, débarquements et valeurs en 2008, Tableau 43, MPO).**

- **The scientists have been inquiring a lot about the percentage of cod in the seal diet, but their main method consisting in counting otoliths (small bones located in the head of fish) seems to be inadequate for big size cods as some evidence (http://www.chasseursdephoques.com/multimediaf.html, 2nd video) suggest that cods often only cod belly eat (behaviour known as *belly bite*). It means they could eat a lot of fish, or at least kill a large amount without leaving any measurable traces. This fact is underlined by Dr. W.D. Bowen's presentation (http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/csas-sccs/publications/pro-cr/2009/2009_020-eng.htm , 4th paragraph).**

- **That the seal consumes cod or the food of the cod really is not that relevant since, in either case, it impacts negatively the species lower down in the food chain. The seal also harms fish stocks in various ways, among others, by transmitting parasites (worms), disturbing reproduction, etc … (http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/coe-cde/cemam/report-rapport/sect3-eng.htm , paragraph 3.4). Cod appears in the IUCN list as « vulnerable specie ». (http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/8784/0)**

- **When a wild population exceeds the critical threshold, three actions are considered: one of his predators is introduced, part of the population is deported towards other zones or a controlled cull is organized. That's what happens with coyote, wolf, wild boar, wild goose, kangaroo, etc. With seal, however, we cannot, of course, use the first two methods. It is therefore logical to use the third but it would be very irresponsible to waste such a high potential resource.**

Seal by-products

- **Seal's skins are packed with oil, which makes them waterproof, and their porosity allows them to evacuate humidity. It really is a high quality product. (http://www.furcanada.com/skins-furs-and-hides-ring-seal.html)**

- **The animal uses his fat as insulating material. It stays under the skin, but outside of the meat. Seal's meat is therefore very low in fat (beef contains 10 times more) very rich in protein (twice as much as beef), iron (6 times), in calcium (4 times), in phosphorus (twice), in thiamine (B1), in riboflavin (B2) and in cobalamine (B12). One of the healthiest meats ever. (Source: Mackey, on 1981). http://www.chasseursdephoques.com/images/Viande2.jpg**

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- **Although the seal (particularly the grey seal) transmits parasites to fish via its excrements, Mike Hammill, scientific researcher and leader of the section of the marine mammals, confirmed us during a meeting on December 13th, 2011, that tests performed on more than a hundred seals showed no parasite in the meat. None. These results will be officially published start of 2012. A study on presence or absence of contaminant in the meat will follow. (http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/coe-cde/cemam/teams-equipes/Hammill/hammill-eng.htm)**

- **Supplements of Omega-3 prevent and treat diabetes, arthritis, epilepsy and cardiovascular diseases, main reason of mortality in industrial countries. We find some Omega-3 in fish fat, but in smaller quantity. Besides, while the fish oil contains only EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), the seal one provides the important DPA on top (docosapentaenoic acid), making it way more complete. (http://www.dpagold.com/)**

- **Other very interesting products could be developed with seal parts such as collagen and cardiac valves. It remains possible to use the rests of meat to enrich pet and farm animal diet, and bones and nails can also serve in art and craft. (http://www.chasseursdephoques.com/autres.html)**