

## **Introduction and overview**

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These abstracts are from a variety of presentations held at the Whale Welfare and Ethics Workshop from 22–23 March 2011 at the Eden Project in Cornwall, UK. The workshop, which involved over 30 participants and expert speakers from around the world, was hosted by the UK Government and supported by the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA).

The workshop was held with the primary objective of providing the foundation of knowledge for updating and improving the approach taken to the management of animal welfare and ethics within the International Whaling Commission (IWC) — the global body with responsibility for the management and conservation of the world's whales. Workshop participants shared and discussed knowledge on the current status of animal welfare science, ethics and management policies globally and the relevance of this to the work of the IWC.

Presentations were made under three main themes: i) whales and the way humans interact with them; ii) global developments in animal welfare and ethics; and iii) wild animal welfare.

The presentations informed the discussions of the workshop which resulted in agreement on a number of strong recommendations by consensus. This included unanimous agreement that whales are sentient beings with intrinsic value; that they have the ability to suffer and, as such, we have a responsibility to protect them and that a broad range of human activities in the marine environment can have a huge impact on whale welfare. Specific recommendations were made on measures which should be taken to control human activities which harm whales, including entanglements in fishing gear, ship strikes and when whale-watching is not managed responsibly. Particular concern was raised that commercial hunting of whales can cause severe and prolonged suffering.

The workshop encouraged the IWC to endorse the findings and recommendations and use them to further develop its approach to the management of animal welfare and ethics in line with international best practice, as well as to formally expand its consideration of animal welfare across the spectrum of its conservation work.