

MARINE MAMMAL AND BIRD POPULATIONS

Status and Trends of Populations

6.1 At its Eighth Meeting, the Scientific Committee decided to seek advice from the SCAR Group of Specialists on Seals and the SCAR Bird Biology Subcommittee on the following issues:

- (i) guidance on the likely or possible causes of declines in populations of marine mammals and birds, and steps that might be taken to halt these declines (SC-CAMLR-VIII, paragraph 6.6); and
- (ii) assistance in compiling data on the population sizes of marine mammals and birds, their diet and energy budgets in order to provide estimates of the krill requirements of these predators in CEMP Integrated Study Regions, at least during their breeding seasons (SC-CAMLR-VIII, paragraph 5.28).

6.2 The two SCAR groups discussed these issues during the SCAR XXI Meetings in July, 1990, in São Paulo, Brazil. The results of their discussions were presented in the Report of the CCAMLR Observer to SCAR (SC-CAMLR-IX/BG/18).

6.3 Both groups provided the Scientific Committee with a review of the status and trends of Antarctic seabird and pinniped populations in 1988, and it is intended that an updated review be undertaken and made available in 1992. The Bird Biology Subcommittee has set such a review in motion, and will report the results to CCAMLR in 1992. The Group of Specialists on Seals is taking similar steps. These reviews would be facilitated if standard formats were agreed for reporting information on status and trends. The Secretariat is therefore requested to:

- (i) provide copies of the previous summaries to the specialists conducting the updates on seabird and pinniped status so that they can have the benefit of the previous estimates when preparing their update; and
- (ii) provide the specialists with instructions regarding the formats in which the updated population review should be presented to CCAMLR.

6.4 In reviewing the status of the crabeater seal populations, the SCAR Group of Specialists on Seals at its 1990 meeting noted once again that there is an urgent need to obtain new census data for all Antarctic pack ice seals. Aerial surveys in the pack ice zone have not been implemented in recent years because of the lack of opportunities to work aboard icebreaker ships. Survey data are required so that questions raised by previous surveys in the early 1980s can be answered (it has been suggested that crabeater seal populations may have undergone a dramatic decrease in abundance over the past 15 years). At its Seventh Meeting, the Scientific Committee endorsed SCAR's 1988 recommendation that such surveys should be undertaken (SC-CAMLR-VII, paragraph 6.7). In view of SCAR's repeated calls for seal surveys in the pack ice zone, the Scientific Committee once again urged Members' national programs to conduct censuses of seals in pack ice areas when opportunities arise to conduct such surveys from icebreakers.

Proposed Workshop on Southern Elephant Seals

6.5 Populations of southern elephant seals have declined sharply in some areas of the Antarctic over the past 50 years. The reasons for these changes are unclear. There is an urgent need to assess the current status of southern elephant seals and to collect additional information which will help to identify the factors causing the decline in abundance. The Scientific Committee has discussed this issue and expressed its concern over these declining populations at each of its previous four meetings (reviewed in SC-CAMLR-IX/19).

6.6 A Symposium on the Biology of Elephant Seals is being organised to be held in Santa Cruz, California, in May, 1991. Although it is likely that the Symposium will address a wide range of topics, it will not necessarily focus on the specific questions of greatest interest to CCAMLR. Therefore, the SCAR Group of Specialists on Seals has proposed that convening a small workshop to follow the Symposium would be a cost-effective way to address the concerns of CCAMLR (SC-CAMLR-IX/BG/22).

6.7 The Scientific Committee recommended that such a workshop should be convened jointly by CCAMLR and SCAR, and it approved the terms of reference outlined in SC-CAMLR-IX/BG/22.

6.8 To ensure that the workshop has the benefit of input from all of the appropriate experts on southern elephant seals, the Scientific Committee agreed to provide partial funding for the workshop. It was understood that without financial participation by CCAMLR, this workshop would not go ahead. The Scientific Committee recommended that financial

support at the level proposed in SC-CAMLR-IX/BG/22 (US\$7 000) should be made available for the workshop, subject to overall budget constraints.