

Awareness of Whale Conservation Status and Whaling Policy in the US—A Preliminary Study on American Youth

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Abstract:

In 2008, a preliminary study was conducted to provide information on awareness of cetacean (whale, dolphin and porpoise) conservation issues and the US government's policy on whaling, in a test group of US university students ($n = 230$). When given a list of whale species, 39% of the participants incorrectly thought that the humpback whale was the most threatened whale species (blue whale: 24.8%; northern minke whale: 20.9%; gray whale: 10.4%). Only 4.8% correctly chose the North Pacific right whale from the list. Only 23.5% of respondents stated that they had heard of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the international body with responsibility for the management of whale species. However, most of those who were aware of the IWC could correctly state its function. The respondents were also asked what they believed the policy was of the US government with respect to hunting whales: 40% believed that the US government was opposed to all whale hunting; 32.2% stated that only aboriginal whaling was supported; 23.5% stated that the US government supported sustainable commercial whaling; and 3.9% believed it supported all forms of commercial whaling. A lack of awareness of the conservation status of whales and the US policy towards whaling suggests that greater outreach to the public, particularly 18-26-year-olds, about the conservation status of whale species is required, by environmental groups and agencies.

Keywords: [AWARENESS](#); [CONSERVATION](#); [UNIVERSITY STUDENTS](#); [US POLICY](#); [WHALE](#); [WHALING](#)

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