

Marine life safe from DND blast

by Barbara Müller

Between November 8 and 21, the Department of National Defense (DND) set off three large explosions off the Nova Scotia coast to test HMCS Halifax's response to a near-miss attack. Although concerns were raised about November being a very biologically productive month, with high densities of marine mammals and other consumers, these concerns were ignored. DND maintains that the area is of "very low productivity."

Newspapers such as *The Globe and Mail* and *The Chronicle-Herald* stated that the second detonation was postponed by two hours to allow whales to move from 8 to 11 kilometers away from the blast site.

Hal Whitehead, associate professor in the biology department at Dal, has studied whales and dolphins off Eastern Canada since 1975 and has been concerned about the shock trials since they were first mentioned.

Whitehead said observers who were present on either the DND's ship or on aircraft told him that the statement about delaying the test so whales could move away was just more public relations.

In actuality, he says, the plane that was to do the survey was slow getting there, and the navy had to wait for the survey to be finished before they could go on with the blast, to the dismay of the crew who were ready and waiting to proceed.

Many fishermen and environmen-

tal groups were concerned about the shock trials, but all were too busy in other projects to pursue the issue.

When Sheila Copps, Minister of the Environment, was questioned about the procedures of the shock trials, she simply stated that "it was the DND. There was nothing we could do about it."

Some of Mr. Whitehead's other concerns included the fact that during one of the blasts the hydrophones used for checking marine mammals in the area were destroyed, and that one of the blasts was at a greater sea state (a rating of 4 out of 10) than is officially considered safe for the environment.

In 1992, blasting by Hibernia in Trinity Bay, Newfoundland resulted in ruptures, blood clots and distortions

in ear sections of humpback whales that died near the site shortly after the explosions. Researchers also saw an increase in the number of disoriented whales in the region that had to be rescued after wandering into fishing

nets. Interestingly enough, one observer was reportedly to have said that this was the best whale watching trip he'd ever been on.

"So much for the Oceanic Desert," he remarks.

New recycling bins

by Wayne Groszko

This is a follow-up to last week's piece about the amount of garbage that was found in a newspaper recycling bin on the Dalhousie campus. In case you missed it, here's the dirt from last week:

Members of the Eco Action group studied through the contents of a newspaper recycling barrel in the Life Sciences Centre. The barrel was only supposed to contain newsprint, but many other items were present, including five Mister Sub wrappers, three lunch bags with half-eaten lunches, eight milk cartons (some with rotting sour milk), five paper plates, seven napkins, five coffee cups, two apple cores, a banana peel, a teabag, two plastic grocery bags, two glass bottles, and a potato chip bag.

Weighing the contents showed that for every 100 grams of newsprint, there were 8.5 grams of garbage. In addition, the smell of rotting food was terrible, and the newspapers were moldy near the bottom of the barrel.

According to Eco Action member Mary Chan, this would make the paper very difficult to recycle and could result in it being thrown out somewhere in the recycling chain.

In order to solve this problem of contamination, Eco Action volunteers designed and built a recycling bin, which fits the black barrel inside, has highly visible signs on the outside and a slot in the top, so that people know the bin is only for newspapers.

Volunteers placed the bin in the Life Sciences Centre and waited one week to analyse the contents. The results showed a large decrease in the amount of garbage. Only one item besides paper was found in the bin. That item was one little box of raisins. (Yes, the raisins were still in the box, and no, Eco Action members did not eat them.) The ratio of garbage to newspaper was 0.3 grams per 100 grams, which means 28 times more garbage was being thrown in the barrel before Eco Action installed their recycling bin than after.

As for the smell, one volunteer commented on the great improvement by saying, "it just smells like newspapers now."

Eco Action wants to improve the recycling of more materials in more locations across campus. To do this, they are asking the university to buy recycling bins from Eco Action, and are planning to hire students to build them if they are able to negotiate a deal.

According to Michael Murphy,

Manager of Environmental Services at Dalhousie Physical Plant, the university has money set aside for this purpose, but has not made a final decision on whom to buy the recycling bins from.

Eco Action is asking students for support. You can send email to Michael Murphy (email: michaelm@adm.dal.ca) to say whether you think the university should buy recycling bins from students at Eco Action.

POINTLESS PONDERABLES

Last Week's answer:

The solution is that your odds are better if you switch scripts. Remember, you're trying to get the best script in order to make the most money! If you never switch scripts, you will quite obviously win only 33.3% of the time. However, if you always switch, that means that you will always win when you initially pick a bad script and one of the remaining ones is shown to be a bad one. This is due to the fact that your agent always eliminates one of the bad scripts after you choose, which narrows your choice down to one. If you don't believe it, try it yourself a few times...

The winner this week was Justin Kyte, who got his correct answer in at 1:15 p.m. on Thursday. Congratulations, Justin.

This week's question:

The Gazette won't be publishing until January to allow for Christmas break, so this week's question is extra-hard. Calculate the exact value of pi. Show your work. OK! Just Kidding! Because of the Christmas break, there will be no Pointless Ponderables question. Have a good break, and exercise those brains for next term! (If you really have a burning desire to calculate the exact value of pi, that's great — but the Gazette offices are small, so we can't store all the paper it would take to write your answer on!)



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