

catching of whales, does not justify the expense of fitting and maintenance. It fails to give assistance at a particularly vital period, when the catcher is very close to a submerged whale and it is essential to forecast with reasonable accuracy the position in which it will surface. On the other hand, an asdic set which will perform the necessary functions should not be impossible to construct. The design of such a set would present a task of considerable interest.

### THE ANTARCTIC WHALING SEASONS OF 1946-47 AND 1947-48

[MS. received 13 December 1947.]

The Antarctic whaling season of 1946-47 was the second season in which whaling on a substantial scale took place since its virtual suspension in 1941. It may be recalled that during the war most of the factory ships were lost, and whereas 34 had operated in 1938-39, only 9 were available in 1945-46. In 1946-47 the number had increased to 15, made up according to nationality as follows: Great Britain 3, South Africa 1, Norway 7, Netherlands 1, U.S.S.R. 1, and Japan 2. In addition three land stations operated at South Georgia.

The Antarctic catches in 1945-46 were disappointing, but 1946-47 was a much more successful season. The catches of the pelagic factories in the two seasons are compared in the table below, which is derived from provisional figures published in *Norsk Hvalfangst-tidende*. (A Blue whale unit is 1 Blue, 2 Fin, 2½ Humpback, or 6 Sei whales; there are 6 barrels to a ton of oil; Sperm whales are excluded from the total of Blue whale units since the oil is not mixed with that of baleen whales, and is used for other purposes.) The table shows that in 1946-47 there was a rather increased proportion of Blue and Sperm whales in the catches, and there was a marked improvement in the number of units taken per factory and in the production of oil per unit. The figures for the two seasons are not strictly comparable, since the size and efficiency of the ships, the weather conditions, etc., are variable factors, but the whales were clearly more plentiful and presumably in better condition. Humpbacks, which are still protected by international agreement, were reported also to be plentiful at least in some parts of the Antarctic whaling grounds.

#### *Antarctic pelagic catches*

Season	Blue	Fin	Sperm	Blue whale units	No. of factory ships	Units per factory	Barrels of whale oil (excl. Sperm)	Barrels per unit
1945-46	3,524	7,732	c. 200	7,390	9	821	730,503	99
1946-47	8,870	12,875	1,299	15,308	15	1,021	1,730,318	113

The season, during which baleen whales may be caught, lasted from 8 December 1946 to 7 April 1947 inclusive, and it will be seen that the total catch came very near to the overall limit of 16,000 Blue whale units agreed upon at recent international conferences. This overall limit was referred to in a previous article (see the *Polar Record*, No. 31, January 1946, pp. 347-49). Factory ships furnish weekly reports of their catches of Blue whale units, which are forwarded to the International Bureau for Whaling Statistics, and the factories are required to cease whaling if a total of 16,000 units is reached before

the official closing date of the season. This regulation has operated for two seasons, but so far the limit has not been reached.

For the season which has now opened (1947–48) it is understood that there will be 17 factory ships: Great Britain 3, South Africa 1, Norway 9, Netherlands 1, U.S.S.R. 1, and Japan 2. The same regulations will be in force as for the 1946–47 season, and it is clear that, if the factories are as successful as in the previous season, the limit of 16,000 units will be reached before the closing date. It will be interesting to compare the catches in 1947–48 with those in the two preceding seasons. It is assumed that some recovery of the stock took place during the virtual cessation of whaling during most of the war years, but the poor catches of 1945–46 gave no indication of recovery. It seems likely, however, that oceanographic and weather conditions were abnormal. The good catches of 1946–47 were encouraging, and young Blue whales appear to have been well represented. It is hoped, however, that a clearer view of the condition of the stock will be obtained when the catches for 1947–48 can be examined.

In an article in *Norsk Hvalfangst-tidende* (September 1947) the satisfactory catches for 1946–47 are attributed to the favourable weather and the fatness of the whales, but it is pointed out that the average production per catching boat per day is not so high as in the most successful seasons before the war.

N. A. MACKINTOSH

#### RECENT ARGENTINE AND CHILEAN DECREES RELATING TO THE ANTARCTIC

[The texts of certain decrees relating to Argentine and Chilean territorial claims in the Antarctic were reproduced, with a map showing the extent of these claims, in the *Polar Record*, No. 32, July 1946, pp. 412–17. The texts of some more recent decrees are printed below. It may be noted that the western limit of the Argentine claim, shown as longitude 68° 34' W. in the map mentioned above, has since been indicated on official Argentine maps as longitude 74° W.]

#### ARGENTINE DECREES

*Translation:*

*Argentine Decree No. 14,062 of 24 June 1947*<sup>1,2</sup>

“In view of the necessity for collecting all records which exist in the country regarding Argentina’s irrevocable rights over the Falkland and South Georgia Islands, and considering that the findings presented by the National Antarctic Committee which functions under the direction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were inspired by the same purpose as that of the ‘Gobierno Superior’ [Government], to protect and recover the territorial estate which legally belongs to the Republic,

<sup>1</sup> Ministerio de Marina General Order No. 157.

<sup>2</sup> In this Decree, South Georgia has been separated from the other Falkland Islands Dependencies and grouped with the Falkland Islands. The implication appears to be that South Georgia is Argentine territory under *de facto* British occupation; and as such, differs from the South Orkneys and those other territories in the Dependencies which are already considered by the Argentine Government to be under Argentine jurisdiction.—Eds.