



1964

(Phillips, J., 2009b)

Whaling

## Modern whaling and whale watching

By the end of the 19th century right whales had almost disappeared in New Zealand waters, and sperm whales were rare. New techniques now allowed the catching of humpback whales, which were more aggressive and tended to sink after being killed.

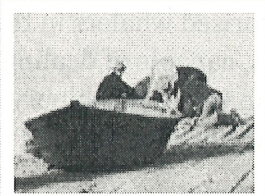
### Whangamumu

The first of the humpback whaling operations was at Whangamumu, an old whaling site from the 1840s just south of the Bay of Islands. In 1893 the brothers George and Herbert Cook moved there and developed a technique using steel nets to catch the whales that passed between a rock and the mainland. They could trap up to 20 in a season. From 1901 they began to use a steam launch to retrieve the whales, and in 1910 adopted motor-powered harpoon guns. By 1915 they were taking 70 humpbacks a year.

The Cooks used all parts of the whale, boiling down the blubber, crushing the bone, tinning the meat, and turning everything else into manure. Operations stopped in 1932 when prices dropped.

### Tory Channel

Modern whaling returned to the site of one of the earliest whaling stations in 1911 when fisherman Joe Perano began motor-launch whaling at Yellerton Bay, Tory Channel. By 1913 there were two more



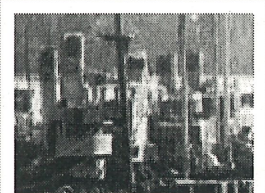
Netting humpback whales



Whaling in Cook Strait



Perano whaling (1st of 2)



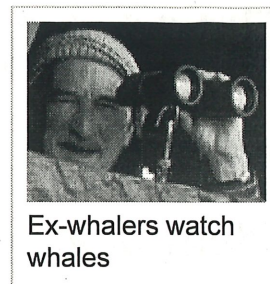
Norwegian whaling station, Stewart Island



Dismembering sperm whale

3rd





motorised whalers in the channel. Perano established a large processing station at Fishing Bay in 1924, capable of dealing with 11 whales a day. This was an industrial plant on an unprecedented scale, where machinery had taken over from muscle and try pots. By 1960 Perano's company were capturing over 200 whales a year, mostly humpbacks, and the occasional sperm or blue whale.

## Other stations

The first part of the 20th century saw other attempts at mechanised whaling. At South Bay, Kaikōura, a boiling-down factory was set up to process the blubber, but the operation closed in 1921. Three years later a group of Norwegians established a permanent station at Paterson Inlet on Stewart Island. They used it for repairing their boats and gear over the winter in preparation for summer whaling in Antarctic waters.

In 1956 Hauraki Whaling Ltd set up a station at Whangaparapara on Great Barrier Island. Charlie Heberley of an old whaling family was the station manager, but in 1962 it closed – northern hemisphere whalers were intercepting the humpbacks on their annual migration and the catch collapsed. Two years later at 4 pm on 21 December 1964, the last whale in New Zealand waters was harpooned and Joe Perano's operation closed its doors.

## International regulation

The end of whaling was due to a lack of whales rather than public hostility to the practice. New Zealand had protected the right whale by law in 1935, but it was not until the emergence of a conservationist ethic in the 1970s that all marine mammals became legally protected, in 1978. New Zealand was a founding member of the International Whaling Commission in 1946, and 40 years later supported the commission's full moratorium on whaling. In 1994 the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary was created, covering most of the Southern Ocean south of 40° south. Despite these measures, it was revealed that whale numbers in the South Pacific had been severely depleted by illegal Soviet Union whaling in the 1950s and 1960s.

## Whale watching

Protection has restored the numbers of sperm whales around New Zealand, and on the waters off Kaikōura people once more seek out whales – to see them, not kill them. Begun in 1987 with a single 6-metre vessel, in the early 2000s Whale Watch Kaikōura was taking 80,000 visitors a year to enjoy the spectacle of sperm whales in their natural setting.

## Biographies



Carl Axel Björk, 1880–1952



George Howe Cook, 1855–1941; Herbert Francis Cook, 1859–1934



Joseph August Perano, 1876–1951

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