

## Book Review

*We Are All Whalers: The Plight of Whales and Our Responsibility*. Michael J. Moore. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois, USA, 2021. ISBN 9780226803180, 224 pp.

At first, *We Are All Whalers: The Plight of Whales and Our Responsibility* seems to be the story of Michael J. Moore's 40-plus years of research and veterinary experiences caring for imperiled marine species; however, as the reader progresses past his initial experiences at Cambridge to his first whale encounters, it becomes evident that this is the story of the experiences that whale and dolphin species have with whalers, in all their forms.

Moore's experiences in the Faroe Islands in 1978, when an old whaling station is brought back to life to process a fin whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*) that had been harvested (despite the assurance that only pilot whales [*Globicephala* sp.] were being hunted from the island) sparks in him a curiosity regarding the effectiveness of explosive harpoons. As Moore expands his research into these explosive harpoons, he writes, "The whalers' goal of killing these animals is not only to minimize their suffering, but also to achieve the greatest economy of time, effort, and materials" (p. 47). This passing phrase speaks volumes to the complexity of the plight of whales in that they are seen as both sentient beings and as a commodity.

Traveling to the Alaskan North Slope, Moore explores aboriginal whaling by indigenous communities, a tradition that has been practiced for thousands of years. With a motivation to learn the quick manual processing techniques of large whales to potentially apply to dead, stranded whales found along the beach, he explores the deep connection between these communities and bowhead whales (*Balaena mysticetus*)—a connection that is at the core of Inupiaq values.

Throughout the book, these accounts of what is traditionally considered whaling are quickly challenged as stories of whales struggling with gear entanglement and ship strikes abound. With example after example of stranded North Atlantic right whales (*Eubalaena glacialis*) at the center of the conversation, Moore delves deep into his work with stranding networks and the frequency of human impact on marine species. Through

necropsies and surveys, piecing together the stories of the whales that struggle for months, or years, entangled in gear or from injuries that resulted from vessel strikes, the lack of, or minimal, response to mitigate impacts from fishing and shipping practices begins to be discussed.

As efforts increase to remove gear from whales, the use of antibiotics and sedatives to improve animal welfare and disentanglement is explored. The 5,301 nautical mile journey of #1102 was crucial to determining the safe baseline dose for sedatives but also served as a "fascinating, but distressing, window into how much a seriously entangled, dying whale could still swim" (p. 129). Case after case of treating entangled whales follow. Although not all attempts resulted in the desired result of a fully recovered whale, every effort resulted in the gathering of critical information that furthers Moore's work to save these endangered and threatened species.

Further reinforcing the title of the book, the final chapter discusses North Atlantic right whale conservation successes and the challenges that continue to be addressed regarding vessel strikes and lobster gear entanglements. Moore concludes the book by answering the question, "What if we lose the North Atlantic right whale species?" (p. 183). As someone who has spent more than two decades working to communicate the importance of ocean protection and conservation, the answer to this question is critically important to evoke the individual and collective changes needed to save habitat and species. Although the question is brought up in one of the final paragraphs, a case can be made that the entire book is Moore's answer to this question.

In summary, *We Are All Whalers: The Plight of Whales and Our Responsibility* is an excellent read and highly recommended for anyone looking to dive into whale conservation without leaving the comforts of their homes.

MaryEllen Mateleska  
Mystic Aquarium  
55 Coogan Boulevard  
Mystic, CT 06355, USA  
mmateleska@mysticaquarium.org