



The Islands and the Whales: additional resources

Compiled by GHF Classics volunteer, Dr Timo Tolppa

News Articles

[Silent poison making whaling a political hot potato in the Faroe Islands](#) (DW, 2016)

- Describes the custom of whale hunting and the increasing international criticism of this practice, including the clashes between the Faroese and Sea Shepherd activists.
- Describes the scientific work done by Dr Pal Weihe and the effects of mercury on human health.
- Outlines the political stance taken by the Faroese representatives and the argument that the focus should be on cleaning up oceans rather than what the Faroese eat.

[Faroe Islands: Many young men, with just as many futures](#) (Nordregio Magazine, n.d.)

- Describes the future plans of 8th graders on the Faroe Islands and talks about their aspirations - mentioning especially the divide between those wishing to leave the country and those wishing to stay.

Reports

[Global Mercury Assessment 2018](#) (UN Environment).

- Human activities have increased total atmospheric mercury concentrations by about 450% above natural levels.
- All people are exposed to some amount of mercury. All forms of mercury are toxic, but the principal effects differ. Exposures to elemental mercury may affect the nervous system. Exposures to inorganic mercury compounds may affect the kidneys. Exposures to methylmercury are associated with adverse effects on brain development, especially in fetuses.
- People in the Faroe Islands and the Seychelle Islands have seen dramatic decreases from previously very high levels of mercury.

[AMAP Assessment 2015: Human Health in the Arctic](#) (Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme)

- Levels of most persistent organic pollutants and metals measured in human tissues are declining in many regions of the circumpolar Arctic.
- Studies in the Faroe Islands and in Nunavik show that children exposed to methylmercury *in utero* exhibit a range of neurobehavioral effects (e.g. decreased motor function, attention span, verbal abilities, memory, and other cognitive functions including IQ, attention problems and hyperactive behaviour) and that the effects are dose-dependent: the greater the mercury exposure, the greater the effect. Follow-up studies suggest that the deficits could be permanent.
- Studies also show that mercury exposure results in reduced immune function, lower sperm count and higher blood pressure.

Scientific Publications

[A State-of-the-Science Review of Mercury Biomarkers in Human Populations Worldwide Between 2000 and 2018](#) (Environ Health Perspectives)

- This review suggests that all populations worldwide are exposed to some amount of mercury.
- We identified four populations of concern: a) Arctic populations who consume fish and marine mammals; b) tropical riverine communities (especially Amazonian) who consume fish and in some cases may be exposed to mining; c) coastal and/or small-island communities who substantially depend on seafood; and d) individuals who either work or reside among artisanal and small-scale gold mining sites.

[Protecting Fat Mammals or Carnivorous Humans? Towards an Environmental History of Whales](#) (Historical Social Research, 2004).

- Compares the various discourses/historical frames applied to whaling as an economic vs traditional vs environmental issue using several examples, one of them being the Faroe Islands

[Dietary Recommendations Regarding Pilot Whale Meat and Blubber in the Faroe Islands](#) (International Journal of Circumpolar Health, 2012)

- In short, the results have so far shown that: mercury from pilot whale meat adversely affects the foetal development of the nervous system; the mercury effect is still detectable during adolescence; the mercury from the maternal diet affects the blood pressure of the children; the contaminants of the blubber adversely affect the immune system so that the children react more poorly to immunizations; and contaminants in pilot whales appear to increase the risk of developing Parkinson's disease in those who often eat pilot whale.
- From the latest research results, the authors consider that the conclusion from a human health perspective must be to recommend that pilot whale is no longer used for human consumption.

Other

[Minamata Convention on Mercury](#)

- The Minamata Convention on Mercury is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury that entered into force in August 2017.
- Major highlights of the Minamata Convention include a ban on new mercury mines, the phase-out of existing ones, the phase out and phase down of mercury use in a number of products and processes, control measures on emissions to air and on releases to land and water, and the regulation of the informal sector of artisanal and small-scale gold mining.

[The Islands and the Whales soundtrack on Spotify](#)

[International Whaling Commission](#) for environmental impacts, etc.

<http://www.whaling.fo> seems to be the official website on whaling by the Faroese authorities

[Surprising sources of mercury pollution](#)

TED Playlist of five talks

[What's happening to the ocean?](#)