

## South Korean whale kills under-reported

May 21 2007

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A U.S. study of whale meat sold in South Korea suggests the number of whales being sold for human consumption is putting minke whales further at risk.

The Oregon State University study determined the number of threatened whales killed for human consumption is much higher than that being reported to the International Whaling Commission.

The study -- led by Scott Baker, associate director of Oregon State University's Marine Mammal Institute -- involved 289 samples taken from several shops selling whale meat in certain Korean coastal cities from 1999 to 2003. Through DNA profiling the scientists discovered their 289 samples came from 205 whales.

Since the government of South Korea reported to the IWC that 458 minke whales killed during that five-year period, Baker said scientists question the accuracy of that number.

"Since the average market 'half-life' of whale meat is six weeks, at most, we should have found far fewer individuals -- or the number of whales killed is actually much greater than is being reported," Baker said.

The research appears in the journal *Molecular Ecology*.

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