

Australia: Japan whale research 'bizarre'

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Australian scientists say that Japanese research on whales, the justification for its whaling program, has produced few results and is often "strange."

At this weekend's International Whaling Commission in London, the Australian delegation plans to argue for the end of a loophole that allows taking whales for scientific research, the Sydney Daily Telegraph reported.

Nick Gales, the head of the Australian scientific delegation, said that a review of Japanese research found that scientists have published only 43 papers in 18 years, which he called "an incredibly low publication rate." Papers on whale mortality contained such wide margins of error that they were useless, he added.

Japanese scientists have also performed what Gales called "really bizarre" experiments like injecting Minke whale sperm into cow eggs.

"It's totally esoteric and very strange research," he said.

Environment Minister Peter Garrett said the review shows Japan's real motive for its whaling is commercial.

"I challenge anyone to look at this sort of research and say it's necessary, to say it requires killing more than 7,000 whales," he said.

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