

Japan must stop killing of whales in the name of science

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Japan plans to hunt 333 minke whales annually for 12 years as part of a so-called scientific research programme. Credit: Morton Lindhard / WWF

The illegitimate killing of whales in the name of science must be rejected, WWF says.

The world's most renowned whale experts, who are gathering this week for the International Whaling Commission (IWC) Scientific Committee meeting, should uphold the world court ruling that struck down Japan's whale hunts. It is the group's responsibility to ensure that illegal commercial whale kills are no longer carried out under the guise of science.

"IWC's Scientific Committee should reject Japan's new whaling proposal," said Aimee Leslie, WWF's global cetacean and marine turtle manager who is participating in the closed-door committee meeting. "The International Court of Justice found that Japan's whaling programme is not science, and the [expert panel](#) that analyzed the new proposal came to the same conclusion. Therefore, the Scientific Committee should not treat it as such."

Commercial whaling has been prohibited since 1986, but meanwhile Japan has killed over 10,000 [whales](#) with impunity simply by self-issuing to its fleet scientific permits, which are allowed under an outdated provision in the 70-year-old International Convention on the Regulation of Whaling. Meat from the whales is then sold as food, circumventing the moratorium on commercial hunts.

Early last year, the International Court of Justice determined that Japan's hunts were not for purposes of science and, therefore, were illegal. In response to the world court ruling, IWC member governments decided to impose stricter controls over any future whale hunts that are conducted for the purposes of so-called scientific research.



Minke meat for sale in Japan from so-called scientific hunts. Credit: WWF / Michael Gunther

Although the resolution was adopted by the majority of member countries, Japan voted against it and has since submitted a revised research plan that calls for the killing of 333 minke whales annually for the next 12 years.

An expert panel tasked by IWC's Scientific Committee with reviewing Japan's plans found that the proposal did not demonstrate the need for lethal research. The full committee this week will make its determination regarding the scientific credibility of Japan's hunt, although the decision will remain confidential until mid-June.

"There is no reason to be killing whales today for science. We know it, the world knows it, and now even the International Court of Justice has recognized that Japan's programme was not science. We hope that the Scientific Committee will do the right thing and state that there is no way Japan can go whaling again and continue to call it [science](#)," Leslie said.



WWF opposes scientific whale kills. Credit: WWF

Provided by WWF

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