

# Soviet marine scientists meet at UCSC with U.S. colleagues

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SANTA CRUZ — A group of marine scientists from the Soviet Union are meeting in Santa Cruz with their American counterparts to review past research and plan future joint projects and expeditions.

The joint research has continued since 1972, when the U.S. and Soviet governments signed the U.S.-USSR Environmental agreement. That agreement is to further scientific cooperation and joint efforts to protect the earth's resources, and one American scientist this morning said the marine mammal projects were among the most successful areas of the agreement.

The review and planning conference is only the most recent of many, but is the first to be held at in Santa Cruz. Conferences are being held on the UCSC campus.

The scientists met with the press this morning at UCSC's Long Marine Laboratory, and spoke of the research aims and some of the results.

Dr. R.V. Miller, deputy director of the National Marine Fishery Service's marine mammal lab in Seattle, Wash., and project leader of the Joint Marine Mammal Project, said that developing an accurate picture of numbers, population dynamics, feeding and reproductive habits of seals, sea lions, otters, whales and dolphins is the project's goal.

Dr. Lev Popov, Soviet project leader and senior scientist in the marine mammals lab of the Soviet Institute of Fisheries and Oceanography, echoed Miller's remarks, saying conservation measures must rest upon sound scientific data.

The Soviets said both sides have benefited from the exchange. There would be no cooperation, said Dr. Alexi Yablokov, a whale specialist, unless something was to be gained by both sides.

The increasing concern of the U.S. government over the exchange of scientific information with Eastern-bloc countries and the loss of technological advances does not affect the marine program, said Miller. The marine research is not concerned with high-tech developments crucial



*Soviet scientists Lev Popov and Alexei Yablokov, kneeling, reach out toward sea lion.*

to military development.

Both contingents said there was no governmental control of the Soviet's movements here, and both groups maintained politics do not affect their research.

The Soviet delegation, however, adroitly avoided any discussion of their country's whaling practices. The Soviet Union is one of the world's largest largest commercial harvesters of whales. The Soviets said their research had nothing to do with whaling. Questions of policy, or how the research relates to that policy, they said, should be addressed to the International Whaling Commission, not them.

(In 1986, an International Whaling Commission moratorium on whaling goes into effect. Currently, the Soviets take large numbers of Minke whales from waters near Japan.)

However, Dr. Valeryi Mineev, chief of the marine mammal section of the fisheries law enforcement division of the Soviet conservation ministry, said all harvest of marine mammals in Russia are strictly controlled take limits and seasons, enforced by government inspectors wherever harvesting takes place.

Large reserves have been set aside, he said, where no commercial activity may take place. These protect both the mammals and their food stocks, he said.

Miller said it was hard to isolate the most important results of the past joint research, but more than 17 joint expeditions into arctic waters, the black sea in the Pacific have yielded up data on many species, including threatened gray and bowhead whales.

Studies include age and growth parameters, he said, analysis of feeding habits and patterns, reproduction rates, herd compositions and what makes a healthy population.

Russian project head Popov said "positive and specific conservation" measures, have resulted in his country, and the data have "allowed us to have greter optimism for the survival of the species (gray and bowheads)."

Answering reporters' specific questions, the Soviet said little research in the Soviet Union is being done on whale beachings, when for still-unknown reasons whales swim ashore to die.

Yablokov said such beachings are extremely rare in Russia for some reason, and he knew of no mass beachings such as have been recorded here.

Several Russian labs are researching communications between whales and dolphins, he said. While time did not permit detailed discussion, he did say recent Soviet findings indicate that while half of a dolphin brain sleeps, the other hemisphere is fully awake and functioning.