



## Bluefin tuna on edge of extinction, environmentalists warn

WASHINGTON (AFP) — An international fisheries group set up to protect Atlantic tuna has done the opposite and driven one species of the fish, the bluefin, to the edge of extinction, environmentalists said Thursday.

On the eve of a 10-day meeting in Brazil of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), environmentalists accused the group of ignoring the advice of its own scientists and setting fishing quotas for bluefin tuna that have drastically depleted stocks.

"ICCAT has continually disregarded countless opportunities to do the right thing and secure the Atlantic bluefin tuna," Susan Lieberman, director of international policy at the Washington-based Pew Environment Group, told reporters.

Marine biologist Carl Safina, president of the Blue Ocean Institute, which studies how human behavior impacts the ocean, called ICCAT "the poster child for not only failure ... but cynicism and a real unwillingness to get serious, be professional and listen to what the science has to say."

"The world's first fisheries management agency formed out of concern for this one species never followed their own science, never lived up to their mandate to manage for a sustainable yield," Safina said.

ICCAT was set up in the late 1960s to conserve "tuna and tuna-like species in the Atlantic Ocean and adjacent seas," according to its website.

Lieberman said ICCAT has for decades set quotas above what its own scientists have recommended for bluefin tuna.

Those quotas are systematically exceeded by industrial fleets, which over-fish the species.

Combined with illegal fishing, this has caused the population to decline by more than 85 percent in the eastern Atlantic and by more than 90 percent in the western Atlantic.

"The bluefin tuna will not be with us and certainly will be extinct if governments don't do the right thing ... and unless ICCAT says, 'Enough is enough, it's time for a zero quota; we're going to put the brakes on this fishery,'" Lieberman said. "If we had any terrestrial species that had declined this much, this quickly, we would have said we have to shut this down, we have to let them recover," Lieberman told AFP.

The environmentalists also called for stricter regulation of the trade in sharks, which are often caught up as "by-catch" in commercial tuna-fishing operations and are also being targeted directly by fishing fleets for their fins and meat.

Around 100 million sharks are caught in commercial and sports fishing every year, and several species have declined by more than 80 percent in the past decade alone, according to the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW).

"ICCAT needs to set science-based sustainable catch limits on the number of sharks that can be killed and prohibit the retention of exceptionally vulnerable sharks species such as the big-eyed thresher," Lieberman said.

The environmentalists want the bluefin tuna to be included on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) list of animals and plants most threatened with extinction, and for some species of shark to be included on a CITES list which regulates trade.

"We want their trade regulated so they don't go the way of the bluefin," Lieberman told AFP.

Bluefin tuna is popular in upscale sushi restaurants around the world, particularly Japan, while shark-fin soup is a delicacy and status symbol in some Asian countries. Shark meat is also gaining popularity in Europe.

Forty-eight countries in every region of the world -- ranging from Algeria, Barbados, China and France, to Ivory Coast, Japan, the United States and Venezuela -- are contracting parties to ICCAT.

# Review: Motorola's Droid is a serious smart phone



SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Since its debut in 2007, millions of people have gravitated toward Apple's iPhone, wooed by its sleek hardware, simple user interface and abundance of applications.

Other smart phone makers have been trying since then to dispel the notion that the iPhone is the be-all and end-all of mobile gadgets. The latest push comes from Verizon Wireless and Motorola, whose Droid is a good alternative for those seeking a feature-packed smart phone with a full keyboard and strong wireless service.

The Droid stands out from the crowd of iPhone wannabes with a slim but weighty body, noticeably angular look and large touch screen.

Its 3.7-inch screen is bigger than the iPhone's 3.5-inch one, and the extra real estate really makes it easier to navigate Web pages and play with applications. It also offers plenty of space on the home screen (and two side screens that you swipe to see) for software "widgets" that give a quick look at such things as your friends' Facebook status updates or the song you're playing on the built-in music player.

And the Droid's cost is comparable with the iPhone's — \$200, after a rebate, with a two-year service contract with Verizon Wireless, its exclusive U.S. distributor.

The Droid runs the latest version of Google Inc.'s operating system, Android 2.0, which

includes some enhancements such as the ability to zoom in on Web pages and photos by double-tapping on the screen. With one tap on a photo in your contacts list, you can also quickly see the ways in which you can contact your friends.

When it comes out on Friday the Droid will also be the first phone to include a cool, free mapping application from Google that can announce turn-by-turn directions.

Google Maps Navigation is easy to use and helped me out on a late-night ice cream run — I put the Droid in my pocket, turned up the volume and followed its female-robot-voice instructions while riding my motorcycle across town.

I was glad to see that the application quickly recalculates your route if you're prone to making wrong turns as I am. And if you live in a busy city with unpredictable traffic, you might like an option for getting alternate routes, all of which you can see overlaid on the same map along with their distances and estimated driving times.

Like other Android phones, the Droid has a voice search function. It can be used, for instance, to help navigate routes when you're in the Maps Navigation application. Saying "Navigate to Starbucks in San Francisco" should give you a list of Starbucks Coffee shops. Pick one, and you'll get turn-by-turn directions.

I'll probably stick with using the Droid's

keyboard to get directions, though, as it had a hard time understanding me. The phone tried to send me to Ikea when I asked it to take me from my office to my apartment. It offered me all sorts of unrelated results when I tried to get directions to a French restaurant near my home.

That's not to say the keyboard is perfect. Unlike many other phones with standard, "QWERTY" keyboards, the Droid has keys that are pretty much flat, which often made it hard to type accurately. This wasn't helped by the fact that, aside from the space bar, the keys are all the same size. Two blank key-sized spaces on the bottom of the keyboard — one on the left, one on the right — made me wonder why Motorola didn't try to at least enlarge the often-used "return" key.

One Droid feature touted heavily in Verizon's television commercials is its ability to run several applications simultaneously, which is something the iPhone can't do. Generally, I found that the Droid does this pretty well. There were hiccups, though. As I was listening to music, I tried to take a photo to send in a text message to a friend. Elvis Costello started to stutter as I pressed the shutter button. Another time, I tried to make a call while the Maps Navigation application was running and had to endure very loud instructions about where to turn while the phone was ringing.

I did like the Droid's five-megapixel camera, which matches the resolution of another new Motorola phone that runs Android, the Cliq, and can take sharper shots than contemporaries like the iPhone, whose camera hovers around 3 megapixels. There's also a very bright flash — another thing the iPhone and Cliq lack — so you can take photos in low light.

The Droid's big screen makes for a nice viewfinder, and a small menu of camera settings slides out from the left side of the screen so you can adjust the white balance and use different color effects. You'll have plenty of space to store the photos you take, too, because the Droid includes a 16 gigabyte microSD memory card.

## Before flowers, odd bugs pollinated plants

Before there were flowers, pollination of plants by insects was likely rare, and scientists had no idea of the insect culprits. But a new discovery suggests at least one fluttering pollinator.

Strange-looking insects called scorpionflies may have slurped up plants' nectar-like fluids through long, tube-like snouts, well before the evolution of flowering plants and the insects that pollinate them, researchers report.

The finding could change how scientists think about pollination of plants by animals, which is thought to have evolved as flowering plants called angiosperms came onto the scene during the late Cretaceous, or about 99.6 million to 65.5 million years ago.

(Pollination occurs when either the wind or an animal, mostly insects, deliver pollen from a plant's male reproductive organ to the female parts either on the same plant or another one.)

Way back when, most non-flowering plants called gymnosperms were wind pollinated, paleobotanists have thought. And if animal pollination did exist in ancient gymnosperms, scientists assumed it was rare and unspecialized.

"Back when there were no angiosperms, before the mid to early Cretaceous, all we had were these gymnosperms with tubes and funnels, some quite jerry-rigged to affect insect pollination," study researcher Conrad Labandeira of the Smithsonian Institution's

National Museum of Natural History told LiveScience.

Even so, Labandeira and his colleagues found insects were equipped with custom features made for such seed plants.

These results come from an examination of fossils from 11 extinct species of scorpionflies (from three different families) that lived during the Mesozoic, which lasted from 251 million to 65.5 million years ago.

Such insects have elongated heads that resemble snouts and are tipped with mouthparts.

The male's genitalia curve up over the back like a scorpion's tail - and hence the name.

The insect specimens included flattened fossils preserved beneath overlying sediment and one preserved in amber.

The researchers found such scorpionflies sported long, tubular mouthparts up to a half inch (1.3 cm) in length that were either hairy or adorned with angled ridges and many of which were tipped with sponge-like pads for fluid uptake. The features seemed to be specialized for sucking up nectar-like pollination drops from five extinct gymnosperms.

The only missing piece of evidence: preserved pollen grains. Labandeira said such evidence may have been destroyed over time due to oxidation.

(Source: LiveScience.com)



## Analysis: Google's dashboard tackles transparency

One product stood out this week amongst the standard flurry of Google product releases. It wasn't a Gmail Labs experiment or a new parameter for search. It was a fairly unassuming new product called Dashboard, which aggregates users' personal information from more than 20 Google services into a single, password-protected page.

Google unveiled the new service with a blog post titled, "Transparency, choice, and control — now complete with a Dashboard."

The choice and control parts of the equation are pretty clear — users can update their account information directly from the new Dashboard, which is far handier than being forced to visit each page individually.

However, the fact that Google opted to lead its Dashboard blog post with the word "transparency" speaks to a fundamental concern about the company's current position in the world.

Some time ago, the company adopted the admirable motto "Don't Be Evil," a slogan pundits have often suggested is a dig at Microsoft.

As Google quickly discovered, however, the adherence to such an abstract notion is at times inversely proportional to the size of a company.

As a company grows, opportunities for evil become more numerous, and the ability to police them decreases. Things get even trickier when a company's stated objective is to gather and catalog all the world's information.

Over the past few years, concerns about the "anti-evil" corporation have grown at nearly the same rate as the company itself, from its cooperation with the Chinese government to the cameras it perches atop its Street View vans.

The sheer breadth of Google's knowledge base is staggering, something that becomes far more apparent on a personal level when one investigates their own Dashboard.

But if Google has always been so devoted to transparency, why are we only seeing this feature rolled out now?

The answer is that, ultimately, even the most noble corporation is only as transparent as they have to be.

The good news, however, is that in this post-Web 2.0 world, the bare minimum is ever increasing. As personal information becomes more publicly available, the same goes for corporate information.

The informational megaphone that is Twitter and the blogosphere makes protests all the more powerful.

Remember Amazonfail, the Twitter protest against a seemingly homophobic move on the part of the online retailer? What about the online kerfuffle surrounding Facebook's new Terms of Service? When information moves at the speed of the Web, corporations must operate at a similar pace.

This means more than just creating a corporate Twitter account, it means offering information in anticipation of complaints, which is where the concept of transparency comes into play.

Companies that make information publicly available have less to hide, and it therefore becomes more difficult to bandy about words like "evil." Sunlight, as the saying goes, is the best disinfectant.

Fortunately, the Internet is history's most powerful suggestion box, and if corporations want to operate in that world, they have to listen.

(Source: PC Magazine)

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