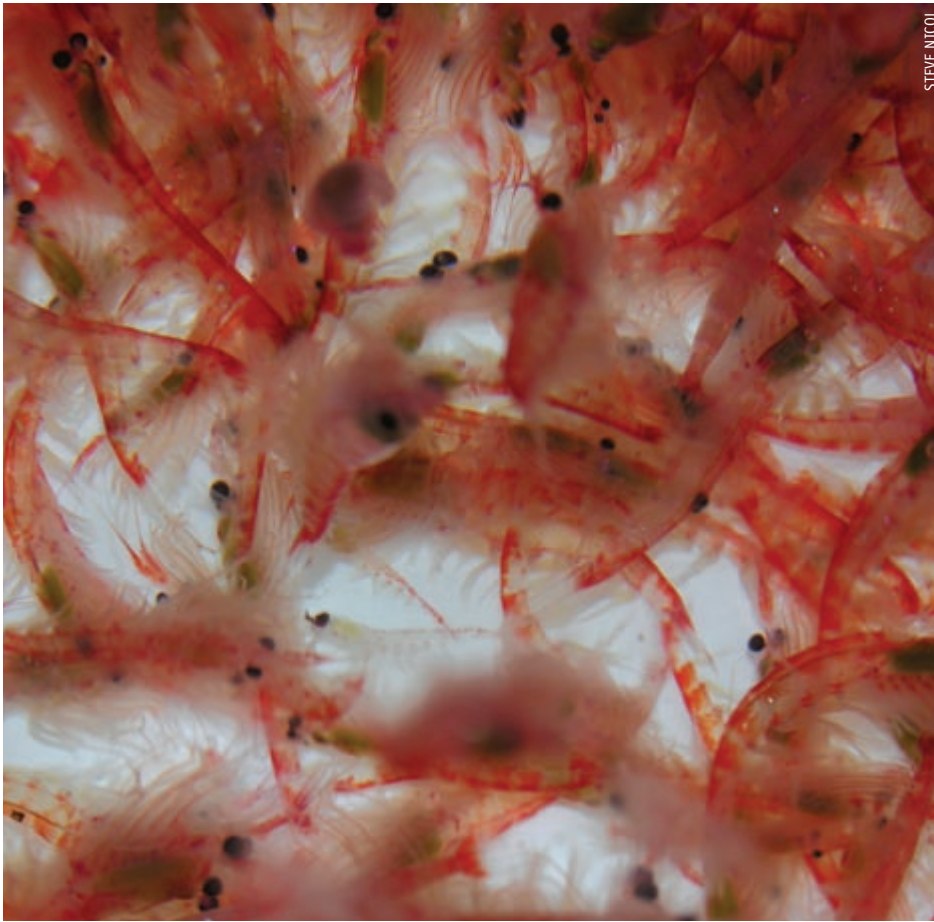


Twenty-five years of conservation



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The Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) celebrated its 25th annual meeting this year at the Commission's headquarters in Hobart. The Commission was established in 1982 pursuant to the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. The founding of the Commission represented a seminal move by the Antarctic Treaty System to adopt a conservation and resource management approach to ensure the health of the Southern Ocean ecosystem. The Commission now enjoys an international reputation as a leading regional conservation and fisheries management organisation.

The Convention arose out of increasing concern amongst Antarctic Treaty Parties over the expanding krill fishery. The negotiating Parties were concerned about the effect that krill harvesting might have on an ecosystem reliant on this marine resource and thought that early management intervention might avoid overexploitation.

CCAMLR represents a unique approach to the conservation of Antarctic marine living resources, where conservation includes harvesting, providing it constitutes 'rational use'. It was the first ecosystem-based approach to marine resource conservation and is internationally recognised as a progressive model for fisheries management.

The first phase of CCAMLR involved reactive management, where the Commission responded to the over-exploitation of stocks from earlier unregulated fishing. Over time CCAMLR has adopted a precautionary approach to new fisheries and developed methods for implementing an ecosystem-based approach to managing fishing, including monitoring and assessments. Decisions based on sound scientific research and modelling remains a fundamental tenet of the Commission.

CCAMLR has been a world leader in the development of some significant tools for international conservation and fisheries management, such as the catch documentation scheme for Patagonian toothfish (*Dissostichus spp.*) and the centralised vessel monitoring system (*Australian Antarctic Magazine* 7: 32). CCAMLR has been active in reducing the incidental mortality of seabirds, including endangered albatrosses, and also led the way with observation and inspection regimes.

Australia has been a major participant in initiatives developed by CCAMLR to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, particularly in the development of conservation measures, notably the catch documentation scheme, and reducing seabird mortality. The surveillance and enforcement presence in the Southern Ocean has been increasing over recent years. Australia and other nations, such as France, New Zealand, the UK and South Africa,

Australia was influential at the meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) in November, and was successful in getting the Commission's agreement on a number of proposals including:

- stronger measures to combat illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing, including to prevent port access by vessels listed by the Commission as having engaged in IUU fishing and to control Convention Parties' nationals from engaging in IUU fishing;
- an interim prohibition on deep sea gillnetting in the CCAMLR Area;
- an improved capacity building programme to encourage non-Contracting Parties to participate in measures to deter IUU activity, including participation in the CCAMLR Catch Documentation Scheme; and
- an intersessional review, led by Australia, of the System of Inspection to see what further improvements might be needed. The system governs the boarding and inspection of Parties' vessels to ensure they are complying with conservation measures.

Another notable achievement for Australian Government Antarctic Division scientists was the acceptance of the results of a major marine survey that assessed krill biomass in the waters off the western section of the Australian Antarctic Territory (page 18).

Other significant decisions by the Commission included:

- the adoption of a conservation measure placing an interim prohibition on fishing for sharks for purposes other than science; and
- general agreement to undertake an assessment of impacts arising from destructive fishing practices prior to the commencement of fishing activities.

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have all increased their monitoring and surveillance efforts, including through bilateral cooperation, in response to the continued threat of IUU fishing in the convention area. Despite the significant advances that CCAMLR has made in reducing IUU fishing, it remains a serious threat.

To maintain its position as a world leader in the conservation and management of marine resources, CCAMLR needs to address the threat posed by non-Party vessels fishing in the convention area, to increase international cooperation for the conservation of high seas marine living resources, and to continue its implementation of sustainable fishing practices.

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