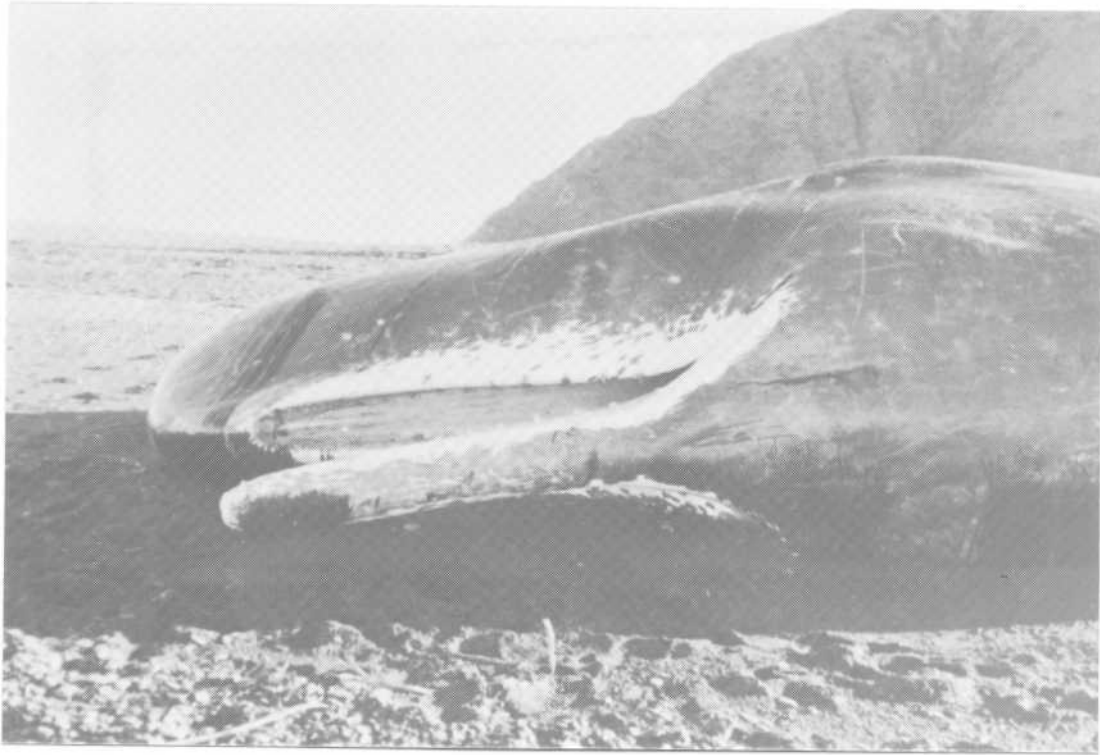


# SPERM WHALE

## JAW REMOVAL & PREPARATION



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## SPERM WHALE JAW REMOVAL AND PREPARATION

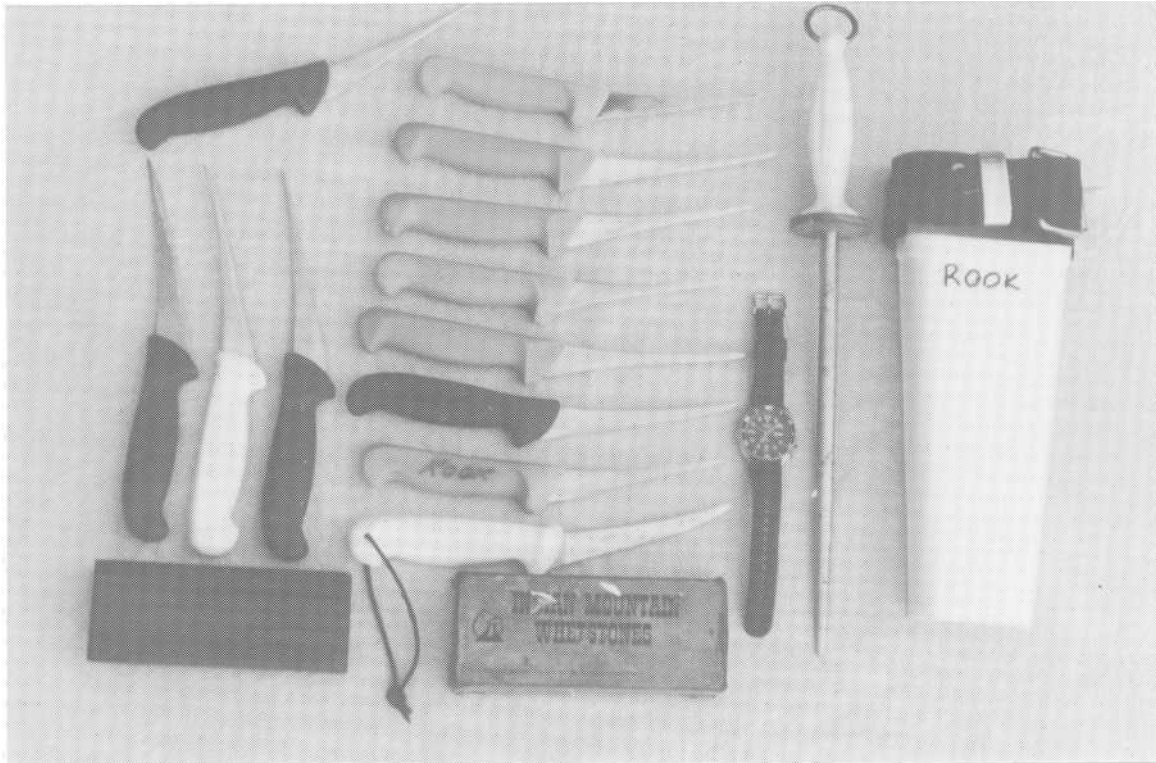
### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The primary purpose of this functional document is to provide those Departmental staff who could end up with the daunting task of removing their first sperm whale jaw bone with the confidence to achieve this by following a simple working document.

The secondary purpose is the proper preparation of sperm whale jaw bone and teeth for carving purposes. If this material is not prepared in the proper manner it will be rendered virtually useless.

### JAW REMOVAL

#### **A Photograph 1: Equipment - Knives, etc.**



The key to jaw removal is in the type and sharpness of knives used.

Sperm whale blubber is extremely tough and very difficult material to cut unless knives are carefully honed and razor sharp. The very best knives available are old ex-meatworks knives which are very thin and worn out in so far as the meat industry are concerned. However, they are magnificent for sperm whale blubber. This is because they have very little drag in comparison to a broad blade - no matter if the latter is razor sharp.

A personal approach to management of any meatworks explaining the purpose to which these tools will be put will ensure a good supply of these items.

Please note in photograph 1 that a rubber safety washer is in place on the steel, this is a very important safety measure when working with slippery, oily, bloody knives as the chance of slipping when handling them is a real possibility.

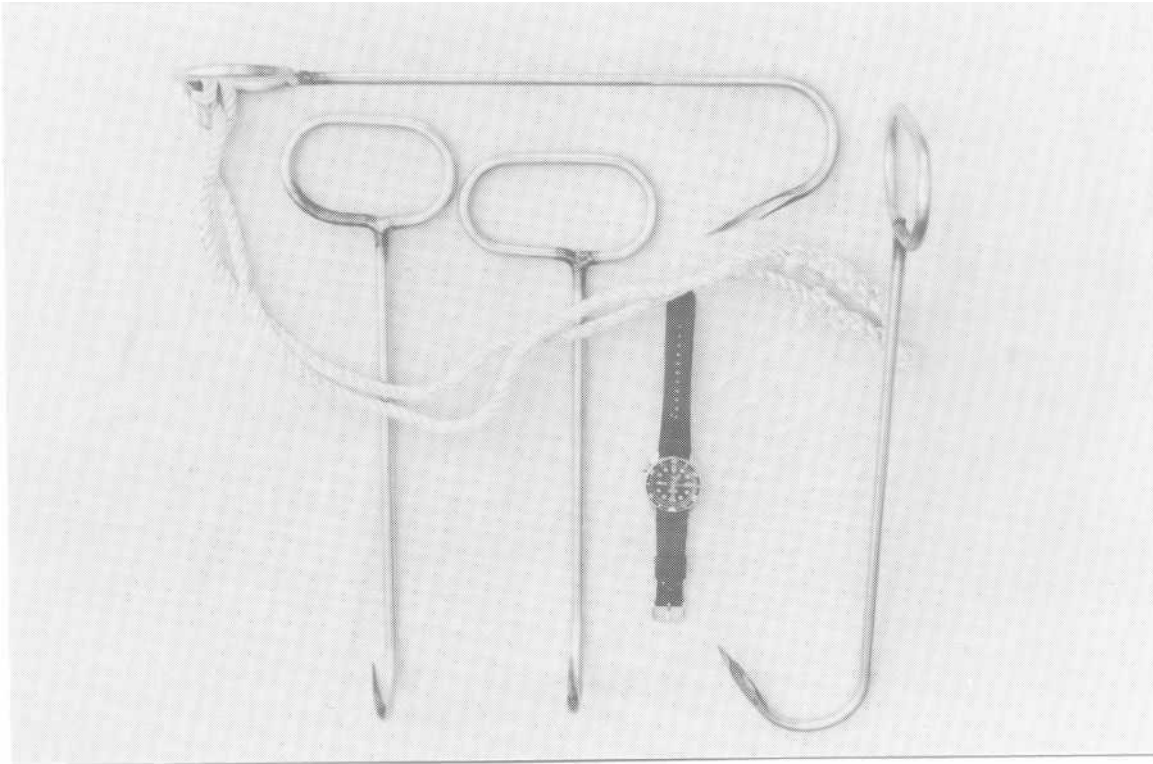
As a matter of personal preference I carry a box in my vehicle and have a large number of special knives in that kit. There are three very good reasons for this;

1. Safety  
Trying to sharpen knives on the beach under oily, bloody and sandy situations is difficult and unsafe.
2. Convenience  
Carting oil stones, kerosene etc is an unwanted hassle.
3. Blade Sharpening  
The best place for this task is on a stable bench with plenty of time to spare, where each tool can be worked on at leisure and honed to a razor edge.

### **Hip Boots**

These boots are excellent for this work especially if animals are starting to decompose.

**Photograph 2: Blubber Hooks (Stainless Steel)**

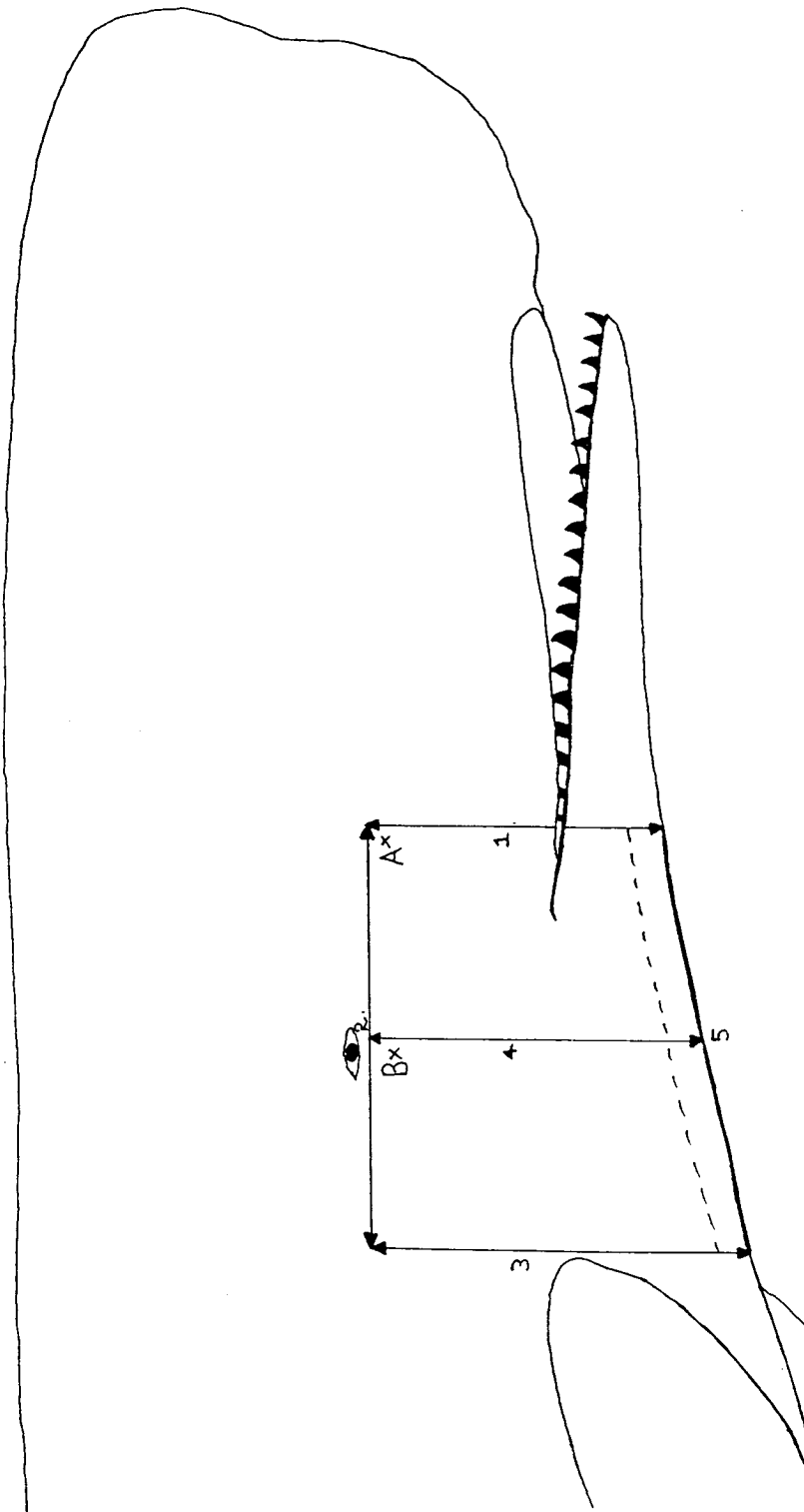


These tools are invaluable for jaw removal when two people are working as a team.

### **B     Boning Out Jaw**

I would strongly suggest that by far the best position to work on a dead whale is in shallow water, unless circumstances prevent this, i.e. heavy surf conditions make cutting dangerous for the operator. A handy source of water assists greatly in the cleaning of tools, hands and flushing away of oil/blood from the work site.

Do not tow or roll carcass to burial site and attempt the job there. Sand and grit will be on the whale's skin in addition to fine particles forced into tears and abrasions under the skin during rolling/towing operations. No amount of water will remove it all once it has dried. This material, as can be imagined, dulls sharp knives thereby prolonging your job.



**BONING OUT JAW (refer to diagram)**

**C Blubber Removal**

1. The initial deep cut through whale blubber/meat is on a vertical line from below the eye down to the corner of mouth.
2. Cut a horizontal deep line towards rear of animal and stop short of the leading edge of front flipper (**NB**: bone of skull is just beneath surface under animal's eye). Proceed carefully otherwise edge on knife will be lost on skull bone.
3. Take a vertical line down and cut as far as possible under whale's belly.
4. Cut 4 is identical to 3, the reason for this is ease of handling blubber sheets.
5. After line 5 is cut, select your longest bladed knife and cut as deep as possible along this line, through the blubber and well into the meat. This ensures that blubber and meat comes away easily when flensing down to this point.

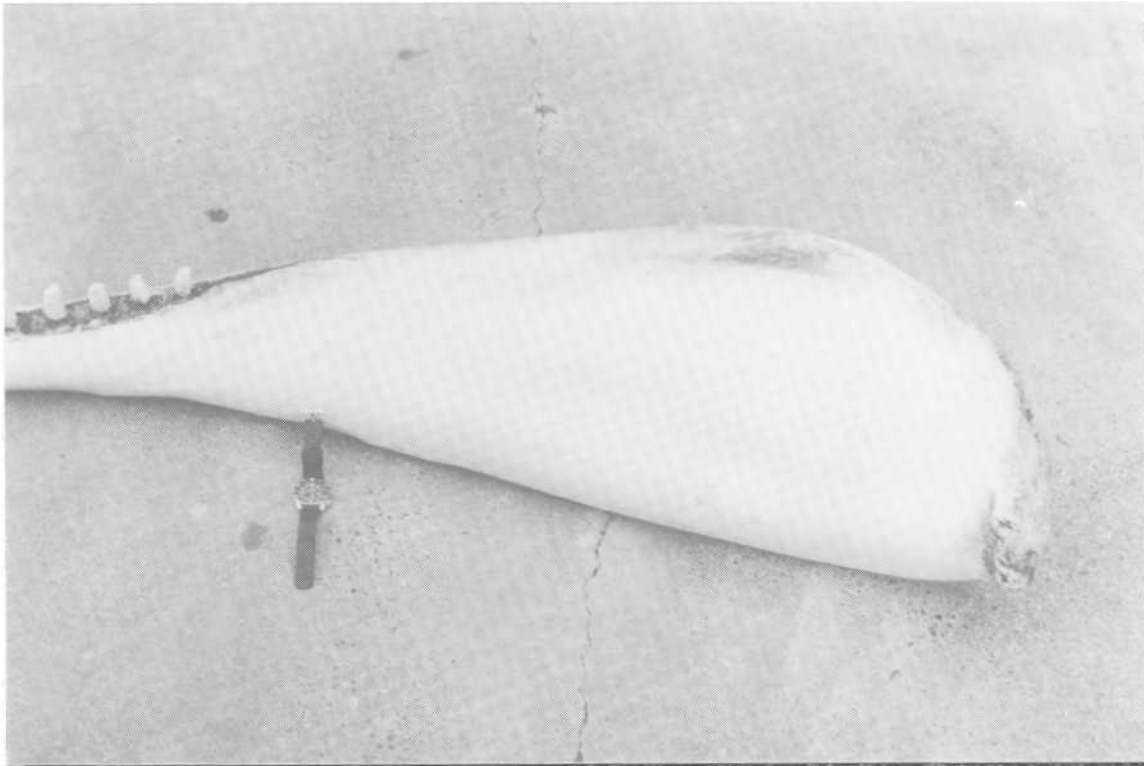
Insert hook into blubber at corners A and B consecutively and flense off working from top along line 2. Cutting down from line 2 makes the job so much easier because gravity helps the sheet roll away and down from knife. Extra weight applied by your colleague on the blubber hook allows long cuts with thin blades to separate blubber from meat. Working in this manner and as a team of two certainly makes flensing a very safe, quick and easy operation.

- Study photograph 3 carefully to obtain a clear picture of shape, size and curves of pan bone.
- Use a thin knife on a  $15^{\circ}$  angle to bone and work back up along contours of pan bone, removing blocks of whale meat in manageable units with hook as you proceed.



You will know immediately when the jaw hinge is struck as hinge ball edge takes a right angle turn away from the flat surface of pan bone you have been working on.

**Photograph 3: Pan Bone and Jaw Hinge**



**Photograph 4: Jaw Hinge**



Study photograph 4 carefully, this will enable you to work out the bone structure you will be working around. Swap your knife for a sharp one and work your way around hinge ball. This area has heavy sinew material but a new knife will tidy up this job up smartly.

**Photograph 5 and 6**

At this point both jaw bones are to be separated. Select a thin long blade and insert it between the gap. The start of this cut will be difficult for approximately 15 cm, as a ball of heavy sinew has to be bisected. Run knife all the way to tip of jaw then ask your colleague to lift the jaw tip vertically. This will enable cutting to take place all the way back inside jaw bone to jaw hinge and intercepting downward cuts make on outside of pan bone/ball hinge.