

# Faeroe Islands: Sea Shepherd Undercover Operation Exposes Cetacean Mass Slaughter

On July 19, 2010, a pod of 236 pilot whales was ruthlessly slaughtered in the town of Klaksvik in the Danish Faeroe Islands. Sea Shepherd was able to document the slaughter through the efforts of an undercover operative who had been living among the locals in order to capture footage of "the grind." The grind is a cruel method of whaling that involves stranding pods of cetaceans in coves before severing their spinal chords with knives.



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Sea Shepherd Undercover Operative Peter Hammarstedt, also First Mate of Sea Shepherd's vessel, the *Bob Barker*, had been living undercover with the ferocious islanders for a week when he heard news of a grind happening in Klaksvik over the radio. He immediately drove to the scene. Grossly outnumbered and unable to physically stop the grind, Hammarstedt documented the bloodshed upon arrival.

"Pilot whales are known to travel in pods of 200-300 members. Two hundred and thirty-six pilot whales were slaughtered last night in Klaksvik: bulls, pregnant and lactating females, juveniles, and unborn babies still attached to their mothers by the umbilical chord. An entire pod that once swam freely through the North Atlantic has been exterminated in a single blood bath," said Hammarstedt.

The Faroese government claims that the deaths of these whales are quick and painless, but the newly released grisly footage shows otherwise.

"One whale had five to six brutal chops to her head," reported Hammarstedt. "The islanders basically used her as a chopping board. Her death would have been slow and extremely painful. Some whales are hacked repeatedly for up to four minutes before they finally die."



It was equally apparent that the grind is indiscriminate and ruthless.

"Babies had been cut out of their mother's dead bodies and left to rot on the docks," said Hammarstedt, who photographed a number of dead infants and fetuses. "Pilot whale groups are strongly matriarchal; I can't imagine the fear and panic that these mothers must have felt as their families were wiped out in front of them."

The Faroese pilot whale grind is similar to the annual Taiji dolphin slaughter in Japan, documented in the award-winning film *The Cove*. The main difference is that there are at least eighteen different coves in the Faeroes where a grind could potentially take place, as opposed to one cove in Taiji, making it all the more difficult to anticipate where the killings will occur or to get there in time to intervene and prevent the murders.



*Baby Pilot whales cut out of their mothers' bodies and left to rot*

Pilot whales are classified as "strictly protected" under the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats. By allowing the slaughter to continue in the Faeroes, Denmark fails to abide by its obligations as a signatory of the Convention.

In order to gain access to the grind, Hammarstedt had been posing as a [Swedish film student](#). Even though considerable steps had been taken to conceal his identity, he was ultimately recognized by several hunters due to his role in the Animal Planet TV series *Whale Wars*. Apparently, even the

Faroese have heard of Sea Shepherd's interventions against illegal whaling in the Antarctic.

When the whale killers began to follow Hammarstedt by foot at a distance, he quickly escaped to his car where he fled the scene and uploaded images and footage to get them safely out of the country. With his identity compromised, he began receiving threatening messages within the hour and was instructed by Sea Shepherd HQ to exit the country immediately.

Despite heightened scrutiny and police interrogation at the airport, Hammarstedt has confirmed that he has departed the Faeroe Islands.

Sea Shepherd has been actively opposing and confronting the Faroese grind since 1985 and remains one of the foremost advocates for the whales.



*photos credit: Peter Hammarstedt / Sea Shepherd*

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