

Japan: Protests cut into whale catch

by UPI

TOKYO -- Japanese officials say the country's fiscal 2008 whale catch fell short of expectations due to disruptions from anti-whaling protesters.

The Japanese Fisheries Agency said Monday 680 were caught in the past season, well short of the targeted 850, because of the actions of the U.S. environmental group Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, the Kyodo news agency reported.

Fishery officials said Sea Shepherd made it impossible for Japanese whaling vessels to operate for 16 out of the 100 days designated for fishing in the Antarctic Ocean. The fleet, it said, caught 679 Antarctic minke whales and one fin whale, while refraining from hunting humpback whales as it has in the past.

Kyodo said no one was injured during the Sea Shepherd protests, but officials said they would question crewmembers on how the group obstructed its operations.

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