ON THE RECORD

“Iceland does not subscribe to the principle of survival of the fittest.”

Stefan Asmundsson, Iceland's representative to the International Whaling Commission, defends the nation's position on “sustainable utilization” of whales.

SHOWBIZ NEWS

Knight guider

It's now possible to get a Global Positioning System in-car map reader that talks to the driver in the voice of KITT, the intelligent car from the classic 1980s TV show *Knight Rider*. Sadly, this won't enable a car to drive itself — even if a Hoff-alike shouts: “I need ya buddy.”

THE KOBAL COLLECTION/UNIVERSAL TV

NUMBER CRUNCH

122,500 is the number of species identified by the Census of Marine Life so far.

56,400 is the number of ‘double identities’ that have been eliminated in the process, ensuring that each species is catalogued only once.

56 is the record number of aliases for a single species, accrued by the breadcrumb sponge (*Halichondria panicea*) since 1766.

230,000 is the number of marine species thought to be known to science. It is hoped that they will all be on the census by 2010.

ZOO NEWS

Fish out of water

Lucky pet goldfish are getting a penthouse view in their new ‘supmarine’. The inverted submarine, an upside-down, water-filled glass bowl was invented by a Dutchman for his son. It sits above the water level, so fish can swim up into it and look out.

Sources: Reuters, PC Magazine, Census of Marine Life, Wired

Oil and food costs may bump climate at G8 talks

The world's most pressing problems will be the focus of G8 talks next week, when leaders from rich nations and major emerging economies meet in Toyako on the Japanese island of Hokkaido.

Formed during the 1970s oil crises, the G8 (Group of Eight) is an exclusive but informal bloc of nations — comprising the world's largest developed economies — that meets annually to consider how to tackle problems of global importance.

More than 30 years on, oil prices are again high on the agenda for the G8 gathering, which has climate change as its main focus. It is also expected to cover global food shortages, nuclear non-proliferation, African development and peace building.

In addition to the usual G8 heads, European environment commissioner Stavros Dimas will attend this year's summit. The meeting will expand to include a further eight industrialized nations on the final day to facilitate the Major Economies Meeting on Energy Security and Climate Change, an initiative floated last year by US President George W. Bush to address such issues.

After the political breakthrough of the 2007 summit in Heiligendamm, Germany, where delegates agreed to seriously consider slashing emissions to half of 1990 levels by 2050, leaders meeting in Japan are under pressure to seal a deal on long-term targets for reducing greenhouse gases.

“A year after saying they would seriously consider cutting emissions 50% by 2050, it is now incumbent upon them to agree to it,” says Elliot Diringer, director of international strategies at the Pew Center on Global Climate Change in Arlington, Virginia.

The major economies failed to agree on a draft G8 accord on emissions targets last month in Seoul, South Korea, causing speculation that little progress will be made on the issue. Still, Diringer says: “I wouldn't rule it out, [though] it would require a shift on the part of the Bush administration.”

But scientists and environmentalists have warned that shorter-term targets are needed to avert dangerous climate change. United Nations climate chief Yvo de Boer has urged

G8 leaders to set targets for 2020 during the summit in Japan.

Whether emerging economies such as China and India should be subject to emissions limits remains a serious sticking point, however, and one that is unlikely to be resolved during two days of talks. Some say it might be more realistic to expect the forum to agree on more immediate actions that could provide tangible results. On 10 June, the science academies of the ‘G8+5’ countries — the G8 plus China, India, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa — released a

The pressure is on for the G8 to come up with global solutions.

statement calling on the summit to assist the transition to a low-carbon economy by funding demonstration projects for carbon capture and storage.

“The key would be to agree to something that can make a difference. What could really make a difference is speeding up carbon capture and storage technology,” says Martin Rees, president of Britain's Royal Society, one of the statement's signatories.

“This is an opportunity where the G8 countries with the United States on board could make a declaration that is feasible and financially modest given the scale of the problem,” he adds.

But with soaring oil and food prices shaking economies around the world, commentators speculate that global warming could be bumped down the agenda at next week's talks. G8 leaders are expected to use the meeting to call on nations to consider releasing stockpiles of food and to restrain from curbing exports.

Olive Heffernan

For the latest from the G8 meeting, visit <http://blogs.nature.com/climatefeedback>.