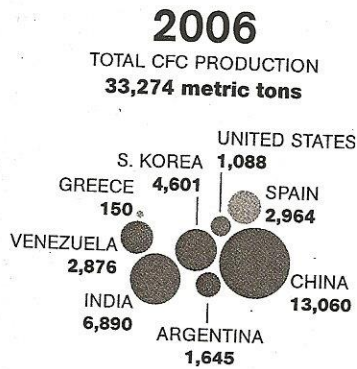
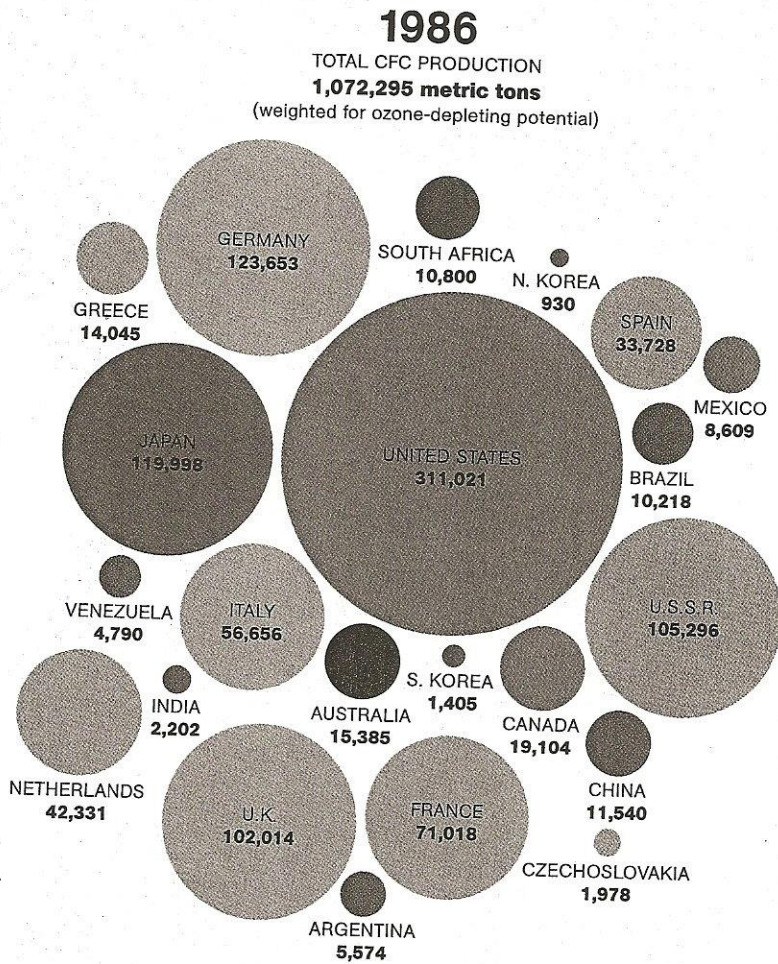


## Ozone Defense

Before headlines tracked melting Arctic ice, they warned of a gaping hole in the sky above Antarctica. The culprit wasn't SUVs but CFCs—chlorofluorocarbons, used for everything from hair-spray propellant to refrigerator coolant. The chemicals were cheap and nontoxic. Then in the 1970s they were linked to the destruction of the atmosphere's ozone layer, which shields against harmful ultraviolet light.

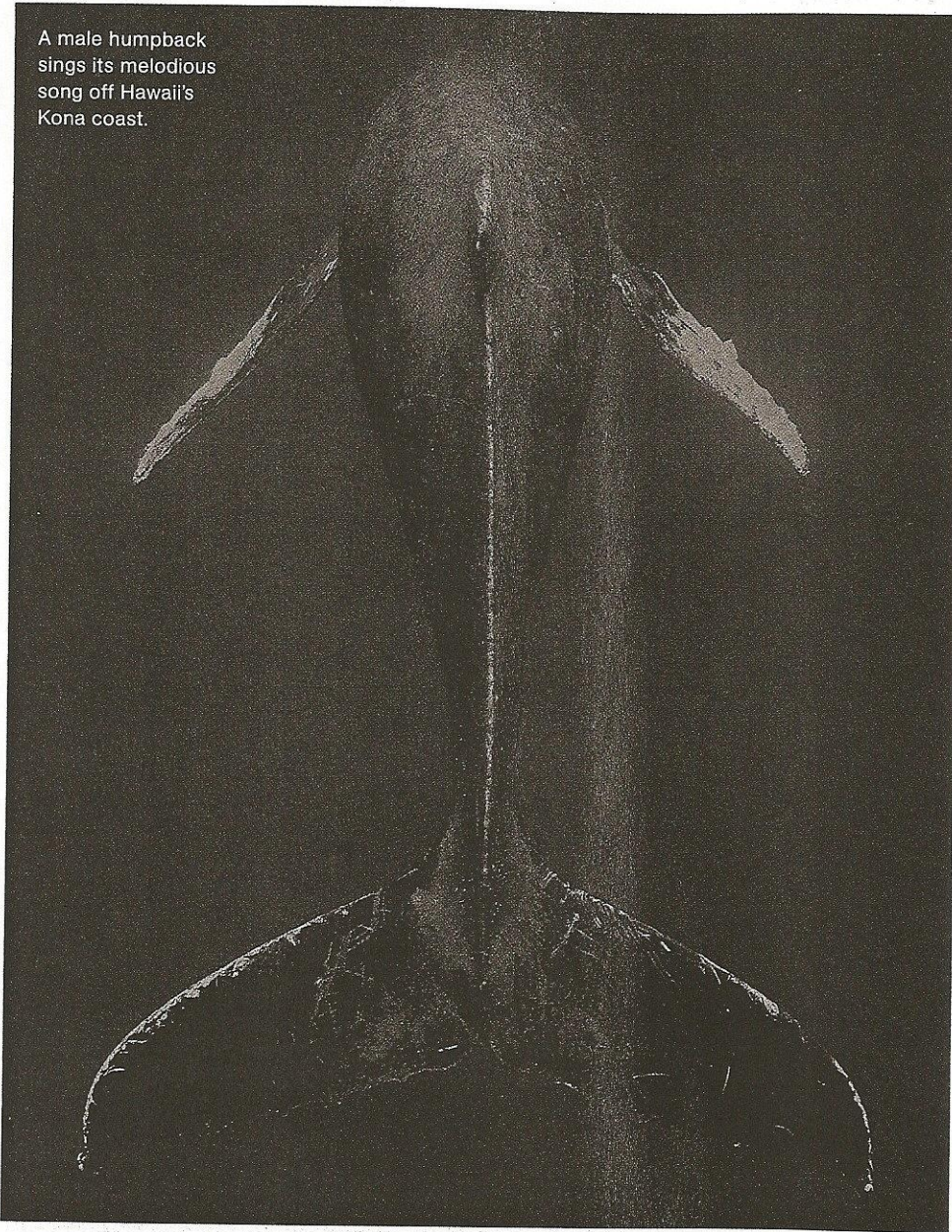
An effort to eliminate the chemical compounds began. The 1987 Montreal Protocol has so far pledged 193 governments to stop making and using CFCs and other ozone depleters—a record number of parties for an environmental treaty. Production of CFCs is down nearly 97 percent compared with 1986.

Phasing out ozone depleters will eventually shrink the hole, but scientists don't expect to see it on the mend until 2050. In 2006 it was a record 11.4 million square miles, nearly as big as Africa. Julian Newman of the nonprofit Environmental Investigation Agency says the next task is closing rogue factories that feed a \$50-million-a-year Asian black market in CFCs for old appliances. —Shelley Sperry



## CONSERVATION

A male humpback sings its melodious song off Hawaii's Kona coast.



**Over the Hump** Humans made a good try at exterminating humpback whales. The relatively slow swimmers were easy targets for harpoons. In the 20th century, for example, 95 to 99 percent of the Southern Hemisphere's humpbacks were killed for blubber and meat. Hunting was banned in 1966. The last kills were in 1973, when the Soviet Union ended its huge illegal whaling program. Leaving humpbacks alone worked: This year they moved from "vulnerable" to "least concern" on the international list of threatened species.

Not all humpbacks are swimming pretty. Those in the Arabian Sea, the only ones that don't migrate to polar waters to eat, are now listed as "endangered"—only a few hundred are left. In past Soviet hunts, 242 of them died. But off Australia, where the singing whales used to be pursued for blubber, humpbacks are the stars of whale-watching tours. —Helen Fields