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MEDIA RELEASE

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2011 IWC/Japan Joint Cetacean Sighting Survey Cruise in the North Pacific - IWC-POWER

1. BACKGROUND

The IWC^{*}/*Japan Joint Cetacean Sighting Survey Cruise in the North Pacific* is a joint IWC/Japan collaborative program started in 2010 as a successor of the IWC/IDCR^{**}-SOWER^{***} cruises carried out since the 1978/79 season in the Antarctic Ocean.

The IWC-SOWER (1996/97-2009/10) and its forerunner, the IWC/IDCR (1978/79-1995/96) programs, were conducted for 32 years long and made a huge contribution to estimating abundance of whale stocks distributing in the Antarctic, such as Antarctic minke whales, and elucidating the trends of whale stock abundance. Both are recognized as the most successful international collaborative research effort conducted under the auspice of the IWC. Japan has made a substantive contribution to conducting and operating these international whale research programs by providing research vessels and crew members from the beginning to the end.

The second research cruise in the North Pacific will start on July 11, 2011, following the first research cruise carried out last year. The research plan of this program reflects the major research agenda of the IWC Scientific Committee. During the 2010 cruise a number of fin whales and sei whales were sighted in the research area where a large

* International Whaling Commission

** International Decade of Cetacean Research

scale sighting survey had not been conducted for more than a half century. Sighting and biopsy are expected to contribute to enhancing the scientific effort of the IWC Scientific Committee will be collected during the program.

The IWC Scientific Committee annual meeting recently held in Tromsø, Norway, decided to name this research program as the IWC-POWER (Pacific Ocean Whale and Ecosystem Research).

2. OUTLINE OF THE 2011 RESEARCH CRUISE

The IWC-POWER program is conducted collaboratively by the IWC and the Government of Japan. The IWC Scientific Committee has developed the research program and established the IWC-POWER Steering Group, the role of which is to design the plan and analyze the results of research cruise.

The Institute of Cetacean Research, under the commission of the Fisheries Agency of Japan, conducts the research program.

2.1 Objectives

- (1) estimation of sei whale abundance (and other species where possible, especially fin whales);
- (2) collection of information on stock structure, particularly biopsy samples, with priority given to sei, fin and sperm whales; and
- (3) collection of photo-identification data and biopsy samples for rare species encountered, especially North Pacific right whales and blue whales.

2.2 Research Cruise Period

From July 11, 2011 to September 8, 2011 (sixty days).

2.3 Research Area (Fig. 1)

The research area is north of 40°N, south of the Aleutian Islands, and between 170°W and 150°W (eastwards), including the high seas and the EEZ of the United States of America.

2.4 International Researchers

Koji Matsuoka (Cruise leader, Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR), Japan)

Sally Mizroch (Alaska Fisheries Science Center, NOAA/NMFS, USA)

2.5 Research Vessel

Yushin-maru No.3 (742 ton)

2.6 Operating body

The Institute of Cetacean Research (Tokyo, Japan)

*** Southern Ocean Whale and Ecosystem Research

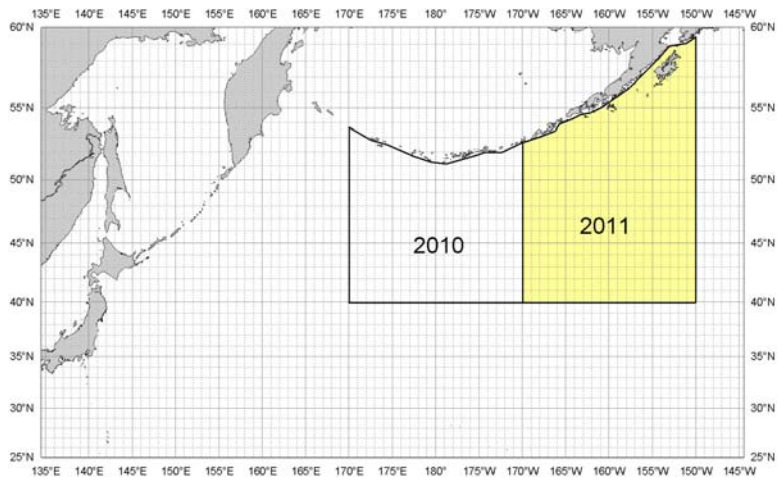


Fig.1 The research area for 2010 and 2011 (yellow).

Photos from the 2010 cruise



Photo 1. Blue whale blowing



Photo 2. Sei whale, a biopsy dart just hit it.



Photo 3. Biopsy sampling from killer whales.