

MEDIA RELEASE

Designated Corporation for Scientific Research

THE INSTITUTE OF CETACEAN RESEARCH

July 31, 2020

2020 Whale Resources Survey in the western North Pacific – Departure of research vessels

1. Background

The Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR) is conducting a survey of whale resources in the western North Pacific during the summer (August-September) season. With the resumption of commercial whaling for large whales on July 1, 2019, it has become even more important to understand the status of whale stocks in the western North Pacific. This year, six ICR researchers will be onboard of three research vessels to conduct simultaneous sighting surveys in a wide area of the western North Pacific, including the coast of Japan, with the main objective of estimating the abundance of sei, Bryde's and common minke whales. This is the first of such large-scale survey since 2008. Furthermore, the surveys will also collect sighting and other information from fin, humpback, as well as other baleen whales including the rare western North Pacific blue and right whales.

2. Survey outline

Non-lethal research methods such as sighting surveys for abundance estimates, skin biopsy sampling, photo-id and satellite tagging for studies on distribution, movement and stock structure will be applied.

The survey area is a part of the western North Pacific Ocean north of 35°N and from the coast of Japan to 170°E (Figure 1). The *Yushin-Maru* and the *Yushin-Maru No. 3* will depart from Ishinomaki on July 31 and will return to Shiogama on September 24. The *Kaiyo-Maru No. 7* will depart from Hachinohe on August 5 and will return to Kurihama on September 18.

3. Survey organization

3.1 Operating body

The Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR)

3.2 Research vessels and crews

Dedicated sighting vessel *Yushin-Maru* (724 ton, Captain Hidenori Kasai, 16 crewmen)

Dedicated sighting vessel *Yushin-Maru No. 3* (742 ton, Captain Chikamasa Okoshi, 16 crewmen)

Dedicated sighting vessel *Kaiyo-Maru No. 7*, (649 ton, Captain Yasuaki Sasaki, 20 crewmen)

3.3 Researchers

Takashi Yoshida (Institute of Cetacean Research)

Tatsuya Isoda (Institute of Cetacean Research)

Megumi Takahashi (Institute of Cetacean Research)

And other 3 researchers

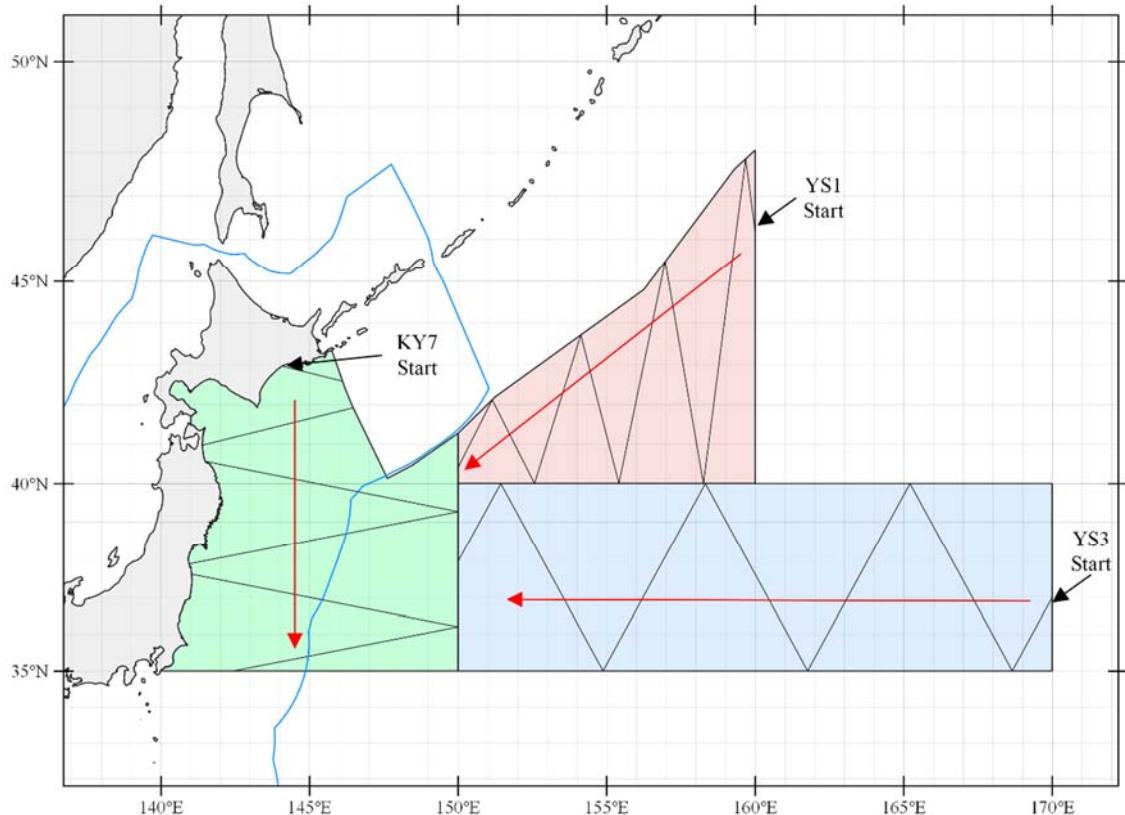


Figure 1. The research area for the 2020 Whale Resources Survey in the western North Pacific. The *Yushin-Maru* (YS1) will survey the area between 150° and 160°E and between 40° and 48°N (pink area). The *Yushin-Maru No. 3* (YS3) will survey the area between 150° and 170°E and between 35° and 40°N (blue area), and the *Kaiyo-Maru No. 7* (KY7) will survey the area between 140° and 150°E and between 35° and 43°N (green area).