



## THE INSTITUTE OF CETACEAN RESEARCH

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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

**September 10, 2012**

### **Completion of the 2012 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.

This survey was the third research cruise in the North Pacific, following the last two years. The research plan of this program reflects the major research agenda of the IWC Scientific Committee. During the first two cruises, a number of fin whales and sei whales were sighted in the research area where a large scale sighting survey had not

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\* International Whaling Commission

\*\* International Decade of Cetacean Research

been conducted for more than a half century.

The IWC Scientific Committee, at its annual meeting held in Tromsø, Norway in 2011, decided to name this research program as the IWC-POWER (Pacific Ocean Whale and Ecosystem Research).

## **2. OUTLINE OF THE 2012 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 an actual survey cruise plan was jointly planned by associated institutions such as the National Research Institute of Far Sea Fisheries, Fisheries Research Agency of Japan, and Alaska Fisheries Science Center, NOAA/NMFS, U.S.A. under guidance of the IWC-POWER Steering Group (Convener, Dr. Hidehiro Kato, Professor of Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology, Japan) which was established under auspice of the IWC Scientific Committee. The Institute of Cetacean Research, under the commission of the Fisheries Agency of Japan, has completed the survey cruise. Followings are summary of research cruise plan and its results.

### 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 13, 2012 to September 10, 2012 (60 days).

### 2.3 Research Area (Fig. 1)

The research area is north of 40°N, south of Alaska, U.S.A., and between 150°W and 135°W, including the high seas and the EEZ of the U.S.A. and Canada.

### 2.4 International Researchers

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

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

Yong-Rock An (Cetacean Research Institute, NFRDI, Republic of Korea,)

Saeko Kumagai (IWC nominated researcher, Japan)

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\*\*\* Southern Ocean Whale and Ecosystem Research

## 2.5 Research Vessel

*Yushin-maru* No.3 (742 ton, Captain Kiyoji Hirose)

## 2.6 Total Distance Covered

2,677 nautical miles (about 4,957km)

## 2.7 Main whale sightings

Blue whale: 4 schools; 4 animals

Fin whale: 149 schools; 210 animals

Sei whale: 87 schools; 164 animals

Common minke whale: 2 schools; 2 animals

North Pacific right whale: 1 school; 1 animal

Humpback whale: 21 schools; 33 animals

Sperm whale: 50 schools; 57 animals

Killer whale: 17 schools; 99 animals

## 2.8 Results of sample collections etc.

### (1) Photo identification data

Blue whale: 4 animals

Fin whale: 60 animals

Sei whale: 51 animals

North Pacific right whale: 1 animal

Humpback whale: 26 animals

Sperm whale: 1 animal

Killer whale: 47 animals

These photographs are valuable information to study life history and migration patterns of each species.

### (2) Collection of biopsy samples

Blue whale: 2 animals

Fin whale: 12 animals

Sei whale: 37 animals

Killer whale: 1 animal.

These samples will be used for examination of stock structure of each species.

### (3) Record of marine debris

Marine debris were found during the cruise: Total of 228 cases (108 cases of fishing buoys (and gyres); 24 cases of wooden logs; and other)

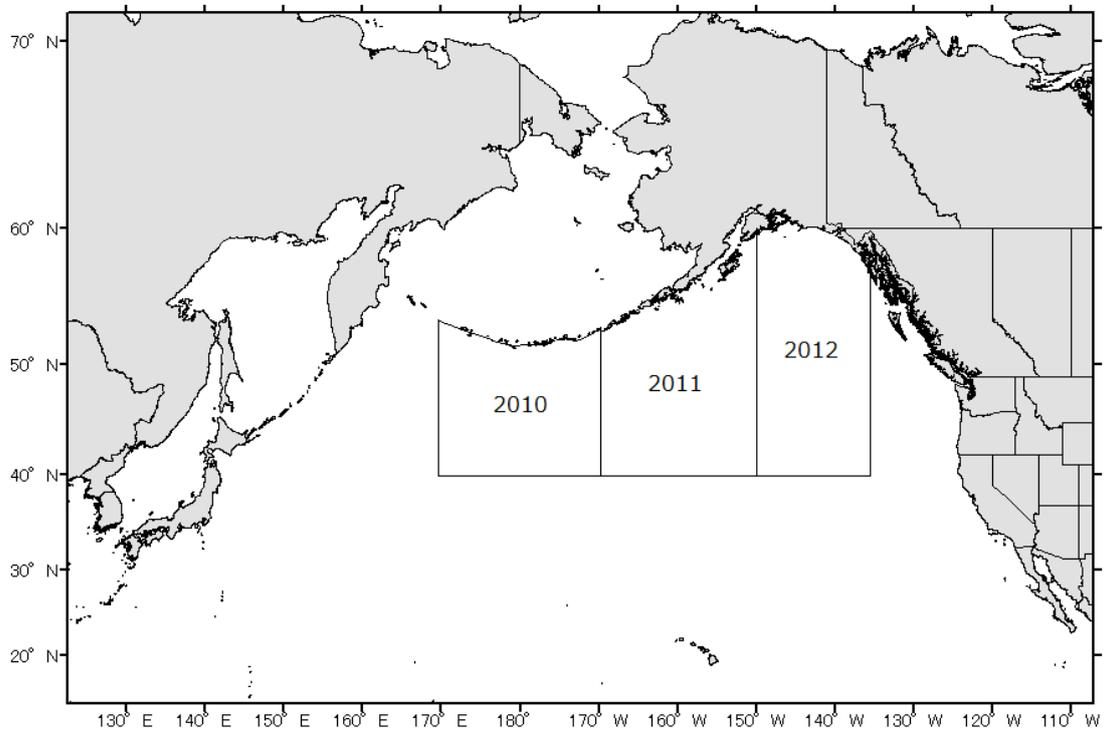


Fig.1 Research area for the 2012 IWC-POWER survey.