

International meetings

Participation of scientists from the Institute of Cetacean Research in International Meetings in 2024

International workshop on the use of genetic data for whale's stock identification purposes

This international workshop organized by the Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR) was held from 18 to 22 February 2024 in Taiji, Wakayama Prefecture, with two main objectives: (1) to interchange information on genetic techniques —laboratory and analytical— used on large whale's stock structure studies in institutes in Germany, Iceland, Norway, and Japan, and (2) to identify future collaborative research topics on population genetic structure of baleen whales.

The objective (1) was implemented through the following activities: (i) training course in the use of the Single Nucleotide Polymorphism (SNP) technique by an experienced German scientist; (ii) visit and advice from experienced foreign scientists to the recently established ICR, Taiji Office, including the genetic laboratory; and (iii) oral presentations on population genetic studies on whales conducted in each country. Activities (i) and (ii) above were carried out at the ICR Taiji Office, and activity (iii) including discussions on future research collaborations, i.e., objective (2), were carried out at the Taiji Whale Museum.

Six scientists from ICR participated in the workshop, and they presented population genetics studies on North Pacific common minke and southern humpback whales (Goto), southern right whales (Katayama), blue whales

(Kiemel), Antarctic minke whales (Pastene), North Pacific fin whales (Taguchi), and North Pacific Bryde's whales (Sugimoto). The history of laboratory genetic techniques which have been implemented in ICR through time and the on-going development of SNP genotyping techniques at ICR were introduced by Pastene and Kiemel, respectively. Based on the three activities above, several topics for future international research collaborations were identified. Details can be found in the proceedings of the workshop (Geiken-Sosho No.17).

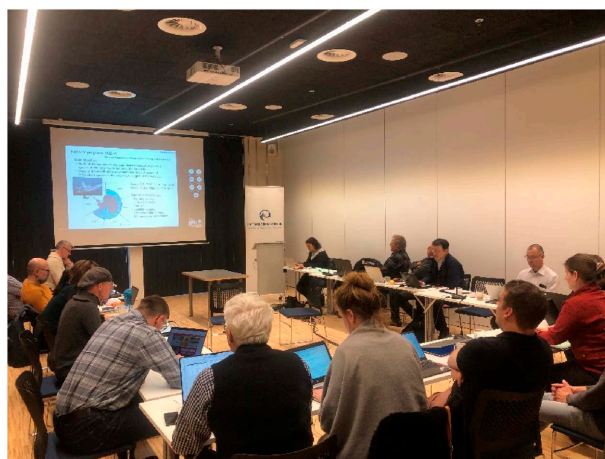
Annual meeting of the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO) Scientific Committee (SC)

The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO) is an international body for cooperation on the conservation, management and study of marine mammals in the North Atlantic. The NAMMCO Agreement was signed in Nuuk, Greenland on 9 April 1992 by Norway, Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, and entered into force on 8 July 1992. The agreement focuses on modern approaches to the study of the marine ecosystem, and to better understanding the role of marine mammals in the ecosystem. NAMMCO has a Scientific Committee (SC), which meets annually.

The 2024 NAMMCO SC (SC30) meeting was held from 22 to 26 January 2024 in Hafnarfjörður, Iceland. Four scientists from ICR participated in the meeting (Pastene, Tamura, Konishi and Sugimoto) as observers from Japan.



Participants of the workshop on the use of genetic data for whale's stock identification purposes held in Taiji, Wakayama Prefecture, Japan.



A session of the 2024 NAMMCO SC meeting (SC30) at the Marine & Freshwater Research Institute, Hafnarfjörður, Iceland.

They presented the following documents: the 2022–2023 Japan progress report on large cetacean research, the 2021–2022 Japan progress report on small cetacean research, a proposal for starting a collaborative study to further understand the role of baleen whales in the western North Pacific ecosystem and the 2022–2023 report on satellite tagging experiments at the ICR. The report of the meeting can be found on the website of NAMMCO (https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Report_SC30_rev08042024.pdf).

NAMMCO-Japan MINTAG project meetings

NAMMCO and Japan have agreed on a collaborative project to develop a new satellite tag suited for use on fast swimming rorquals (fin, sei, Bryde's, blue and minke whales) and pilot whales, which are of most interest to NAMMCO countries and Japan. The project is called MINTAG project. The project started in 2022 and will run for five years. The project is divided into phases: development phase, testing phase, deployment-data collection-analyses phase, and publication-final reporting-workshop phase. The project is led by a Steering Group composed of scientists from NAMMCO countries and Japan, the Secretariat of NAMMCO, and the Fisheries Agency of Japan (FAJ). Yearly reports are available at <https://mintag-project.com/about-us/#reports>.

An in-person MINTAG Steering Group meeting was held from 21 to 22 January 2024 in Hafnarfjörður, Iceland, with participation of a scientist from the ICR (Konishi). A second Steering Group meeting was held online on 17 April 2024, with participation of two scientists from the ICR (Pastene and Konishi). The main topics of this second meeting were the evaluation of tests in 2023, a web blog, and the test schedule for the project in 2024 (<https://mintag-project.com/follow-the-whales/>).

NAMMCO genetic working group (WG) meeting

The first genetic working group meeting of NAMMCO was held in-person from 8 to 9 October 2024 in Copenhagen, Denmark with participation of a scientist from the ICR (Taguchi). During the meeting, discussions primarily focused on the genetic population structure of the North Atlantic long-finned pilot whales, narwhals, and belugas, based on the priorities assigned to this WG by NAMMCO SC/30. Additionally, previous findings on the population structure of the white-beaked and Atlantic white-sided dolphins were reviewed, and data collection and analytical approaches to be standardized across all member countries were discussed. Based on these discussions, several recommendations were made to the member



Participants of the NAMMCO genetic working group meeting held in Copenhagen, Denmark.

countries. The content of this meeting will be reported to and approved by the upcoming NAMMCO SC meeting.

Annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission Scientific Committee (IWC SC)

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) is an international body set up by the terms of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), which was signed in Washington, D.C., United States, on 2 December 1946, to 'provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry'. One of the important subsidiary bodies of the IWC is its Scientific Committee (SC), which meets bi-annually.

The 2024 meeting of the IWC SC (SC69B) was held from 22 April to 3 May 2024 in Bled, Slovenia. Three scientists from the ICR participated in the meeting (Matsuoka, Isoda and Kim) as observers from Japan. They presented a total



A session of the IWC SC meeting (69B) in Riki Balance Hotel, Bled, Slovenia.

of 10 documents: six documents at the Standing Working Group on Abundance Estimates, Stock Status and International Cruises (ASI), one document at the Working Group on Stock Definition and DNA testing (SDDNA), one document at the Sub-Committee on Conservation Management Plans (CMP) and two general documents (O: PICES Observer Report and Japan's Scientific Progress Reports).

The next meeting of the IWC SC (SC70) will be held in 2026.

The report of the IWC SC meeting can be found on the website of the IWC (<https://archive.iwc.int/pages/view.php?ref=22181&k=>).

Annual meeting of the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources-Working Group on Ecosystem Monitoring and Management (CCAMLR-EMM)

The Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) is part of the Antarctic Treaty System. The Convention was opened for signature on 1 August 1980 and entered into force on 7 April 1982, thereby establishing the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. Its goal is to preserve marine life and environmental integrity in and near Antarctica. It was established in large part in response to concerns that an increase in krill catches in the Southern Ocean could have a serious impact on populations of other marine life, which are dependent upon krill for food. The CCAMLR has a Scientific Committee and several Working Groups. One of these groups is the Working Group on Ecosystem Monitoring and Management (EMM), which meets annually.

The 2024 meeting of the EMM Working Group was held from 1 to 12 July 2024 in Leeuwarden, Netherlands. The main topics for discussions were krill fishery management, spatial management and ecosystem monitoring. Under the spatial overlap analysis approach, several papers on monitoring of krill-dependent predators including whales in western Antarctic were presented. Isoda, Kim and Matsuoka were co-authors of a report presented to the meeting titled 'Summary of the dedicated sighting survey for large whale species under the Japanese Abundance and Stock structure Surveys in the Antarctic (JASS-A) during the 2023/24 austral summer season'.

The report of the meeting can be found on the website of the CCAMLR (<https://meetings.ccamlr.org/en/wg-emm-2024>).

The 6th International Conference of D-Amino Acid Research (IDAR2024)

The Joint 6th International Conference of *D*-Amino Research (IDAR2024) and 18th Conference of the *D*-Amino Acid Research Society of Japan was held at Kanazawa University from 21 to 24 August 2024. This is a unique international interdisciplinary conference that deepens comprehensive research findings and exchanges among scientists doing research on *D*-amino acids in the fields of biology, chemistry, medicine, pharmacology, engineering, and agriculture.

A scientist from ICR (Yasunaga) participated in the conference as invited speaker and presented the study titled 'Age estimation of baleen whales based on aspartic acid racemization technique using UPLC-MS/MS measurement combined with deuterium-chloride hydrolysis'.



Scientists participating in the dinner of the IDAR2024 and 18th Conference of the *D*-Amino Acid Research Society of Japan in Kanazawa University, Kanazawa, Japan.

Annual meeting of the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES)

The North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES) is an intergovernmental science organization established in 1992. It aims to promote and coordinate marine scientific research in the North Pacific Ocean and its adjacent seas, and to provide a mechanism for information and data exchange among scientists in its member countries. Its present members are Canada, Japan, People's Republic of China, Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America.

The 2024 meeting of the PICES was held in Honolulu, Hawaii, USA. The business meeting of the Marine Bird and Mammals (S-MBM) section was held on 26 Octo-



A session of the 2024 PICES meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii, USA.

ber. One scientist from ICR participated in this meeting (Tamura) introducing the observer report of the 2024 IWC SC meeting. Under the topic 'Social, economic and ecological implications of recoveries, range expansions and shifting distributions of marine birds, mammals and fish' discussed on 31 October, Tamura, Kato Konishi and Isoda from the ICR presented the study titled 'Temporal changes in distribution and prey species of common minke whales in Sendai Bay off the Pacific coast of Japan'. Under the same topic, Katsumata and Kato from the ICR were co-authors of a study presented at the meeting titled 'New wintering ground for humpback whales that have appeared around Hachijyojima Island (33°06'N, 139°47'E), Tokyo Metropolis, Japan since 2015: Their ecology and positive impact on the local tourism'. The report of the PICES meeting can be found on the website of PICES (<https://meetings.pices.int/>).

25th Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals

The Society for Marine Mammalogy (SMM) was founded in 1981 and is the largest international association of marine mammal scientists in the world. The mission of the SMM is to promote the global advancement of marine mammal science and contribute to its relevance and impact in education, conservation and management. The SMM holds conferences every two years.

The 25th biennial conference of the SMM was held in Perth, Western Australia, Australia, from 11 to 15 November 2024. This was the first time the conference was held in Australia. Katsumata, Isoda, Hakamada and Matsuoka from the ICR presented the study titled 'Abundance and distribution of southern right whales in the eastern Indian Ocean sector (70°–130°E) of the Antarctic, south of 60°S'.



A poster session of the 25th Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals held in Perth, Western Australia, Australia.