

Foreword

It is a pleasure for me to introduce the ninth issue of the Technical Reports of the Institute of Cetacean Research (TEREP-ICR-9). TEREP-ICR describes and reports on the process, progress, and results of technical or scientific research on whales and their environment, as well as the field activities and state of current research surveys conducted by the ICR, both in the central-western North Pacific and the Antarctic Ocean.

In 2025 the ICR continued its research activities including field surveys, laboratory work and analyses, writing of papers and participation in national and international meetings. This, in turn, enabled the ICR to make a significant contribution to whale science during this year as shown in this issue of TEREP-ICR. I would like to highlight here the Japanese Abundance and Stock structure Surveys (JASS-A) mid-term review (MTR) workshop, which was carried out successfully in Tokyo between 20 and 22 October. The JASS-A is a research program designed and implemented by the ICR and authorized by the Government of Japan (GOJ) in the Antarctic. A total of 28 scientific documents derived from the JASS-A program was discussed between Japanese scientists and invited participants from Norway, United Kingdom, Germany and South Africa. The scientific outputs from the JASS-A program were well evaluated and useful suggestions and recommendations were provided by the MTR workshop, which will improve the ICR's Antarctic research in the future.

I would also like to highlight the visits of international scientists to the new ICR Taiji Office. Firstly, the Executive Director (Dr. Paola Acuña) and Scientific Director (Dr. Jorge Acevedo) of CEQUA, a research institute located in Punta Arenas, Chile dedicated to the biological and ecological research in the Chilean Patagonia, visited ICR Taiji Office on 3-6 October. They were accompanied of a doctoral research student (Aida Murillo) of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). They offered lectures to the public of Taiji on the research activities of CEQUA including specific research activities on whales. Furthermore, they and ICR scientists participated in a mini workshop on the feasibility of implementing microbiota research in the ICR. Apart from a productive scientific interchange, they interacted with the Taiji community in a warm atmosphere. Then, Dr. Martin Biuw of the Institute of Marine Research (IMR) in Norway visited ICR Taiji Office between 23 and 26 October to offer a lecture on whale and ecosystem research in Norway, and to carry out discussions with ICR scientists on future research collaborations on whales. Furthermore, the International Whaling Commission Scientific Committee (IWC SC)'s Technical Advisory Group (TAG) workshop was held in ICR Taiji Office in December to discuss matters related to the IWC-Pacific Ocean Whale and Ecosystem Research (POWER) program. Japanese and IWC SC scientists participated in the workshop.

I hope that activities involving international research collaborations and new visits to ICR Taiji Office will increase in the future.

The previous TEREP-ICR No. 8 was widely distributed both in Japan and other countries. There is good evidence that TEREP-ICR is on course towards achieving its objectives. At the same time, TEREP-ICR has been providing valuable opportunities for our scientists to compile and summarize their research conducted over the years, as a precursor to submitting their works for publication in peer-reviewed journals (see some examples of publications in the list of peer-reviewed papers in this TEREP issue).

It is my sincere hope that this ninth issue of the TEREP-ICR will contribute further to an increased understanding among national and international scientific communities of the technical and research activities on whales and their ecosystem conducted by the ICR.

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