



THE INSTITUTE OF CETACEAN RESEARCH

4-5 TOYOMI-CHO, CHUO-KU, TOKYO 104-0055 JAPAN

PHONE: +81-3-3536-6521 FAX: +81-3536-6522

MEDIA RELEASE

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Completion of the 2015 IWC/Japan Joint Cetacean Sighting Survey Cruise in the North Pacific - IWC-POWER

1. BACKGROUND

IWC-POWER, the IWC/Japan Joint Cetacean Sighting Survey in the North Pacific, is a research program commonly known at the International Whaling Commission (IWC) as the *Pacific Ocean Whale and Ecosystem Research (POWER)*.

IWC-POWER is based and applies the achievements, know-how and expertise acquired during the most successful and highly appraised international collaborative research effort conducted under the auspice of the IWC, the IWC-SOWER (International Whaling Commission-Southern Ocean Whale and Ecosystem Research, 1996/1997-2009/2010) research program which ended in 2010.

The 2015 survey was the sixth cruise since IWC-POWER began in 2010. The research plan of this program reflects the major research agenda of the IWC Scientific Committee. During the last five cruises, a number of fin, sei, Bryde's and humpback whales were sighted in the research area in the north of Latitude 30°N, where a large scale sighting survey had not been conducted for more than a half century.

2. OUTLINE OF THE 2015 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 South West Fisheries Science Center, NOAA/NMFS, USA 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 Bryde's, sei and fin whales abundance (and other species where possible);
- (2) collection of information on stock structure, particularly biopsy samples, with priority given to Bryde's, sei, fin, humpback 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 2 to August 30, 2015 (60 days).

2.3 Research Area (Fig. 1)

The research area is north of 20° N, south of 30°N, between longitudes 170° E and 160°W (including the high seas and the US-EEZ).

2.4 International Researchers

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

James Gilpatrick (South West Fisheries Science Center, NOAA/NMFS, USA)

Jessica Taylor (IWC nominated researcher, UK)

Isamu Yoshimura (IWC nominated researcher, Japan)

2.5 Research Vessel

Yushin-maru No.3 (742 ton, Captain Chikamasa Ohkoshi)

2.6 Total Distance Covered

4,306 nautical miles (about 7,975 km)

2.7 Main whale sightings

Bryde's whale: 46 schools; 52 animals

Sperm whale: 32 schools; 93 animals

Cuvier's beaked whale: 5 schools; 9 animals

Longman's beaked whale: 1 school; 110 animals

Killer whale: 1 school; 4 animals

Risso's dolphin: 7 schools; 85 animals

Bottlenose dolphin: 4 schools; 36 animals

Spotted dolphin: 8 schools; 531 animals

Striped dolphin: 5 schools; 279 animals

Fraser's dolphin: 2 schools; 333 animals

2.8 Results of sample collections etc.

(1) Photo identification data

Bryde's whale: 43 animals

Sperm whale: 37 animals

Killer whale: 4 animals

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

(2) Collection of biopsy samples

Bryde's whale: 34 animals

Sperm whale: 1 animal

Killer whale: 2 animals

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

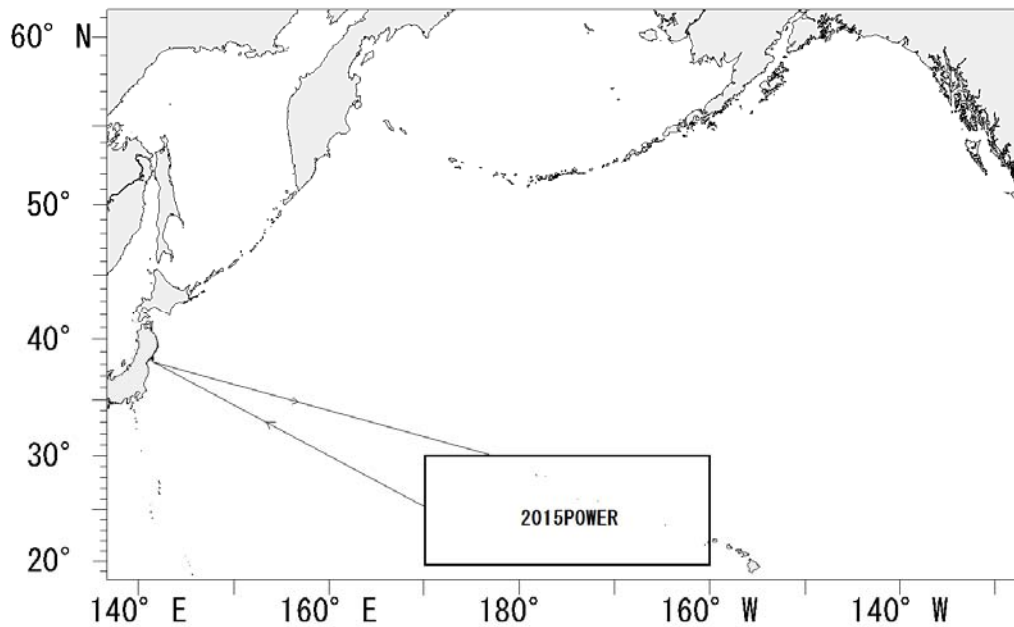


Fig.1 Research area for the 2015 IWC-POWER survey.