

MEDIA RELEASE

Designated Corporation for Scientific Whale Research
THE INSTITUTE OF CETACEAN RESEARCH
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2021 IWC/Japan Joint Cetacean Sighting Survey Cruise in the North Pacific – Departure of the IWC-POWER research vessel

1. Background

This survey is conducted jointly by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and Japan, and is commonly referred to as IWC-POWER (International Whaling Commission/Pacific Ocean Whale and Ecosystem Research). IWC-POWER is the successor of IWC/SOWER (International Whaling Commission Southern Ocean Whale and Ecosystem Research), a successful whale research program acclaimed globally, which was conducted in the Antarctic Ocean from 1996/1997 to 2009/2010. Taking advantage of the know-how, experience and achievements of IWC/SOWER, IWC-POWER has been carried out every summer since 2010 based on the main research plan of the IWC Scientific Committee.

For the past eleven years, the IWC-POWER research cruises have been covering a wide area of the North Pacific that had not been surveyed for several decades, finding large numbers of fin and sei whales in the Gulf of Alaska area north of 40 degrees north latitude and a large number of Bryde's and sperm whales in waters south of 40 degrees N, and valuable data have been collected to contribute to objective stock assessment. In addition, information on rare species such as blue whales and right whales has also been collected.

As the 12th cruise, this time we will conduct a survey in the high seas in the North Pacific excluding foreign exclusive economic zones within 40 degrees north latitude and between 135 degrees and 155 degrees east longitude, from August 2 to September 30. However, due to the effects of the new coronavirus, this year's research voyage will be conducted without a port call. In addition, unfortunately one Russian researcher will not participate, and the survey will be conducted by US and Japanese researchers.

2. Outline of the 2021 Research Cruise

The IWC-POWER program is conducted collaboratively by the International Whaling Commission and the Government of Japan. The IWC Scientific Committee has developed the research program and established the IWC-POWER Steering Group (Convenor: Koji Matsuoka, Head, Stock Assessment and Management Division, ICR), which has a role of designing the research plan and analyzing the results of the cruises. The Institute of

Cetacean Research, under the commission of the Fisheries Agency of Japan, carries out the IWC-POWER cruises. This year, Associate Professor Hiroto Murase of Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology will lead the survey team. The outline of this year's survey plan is as follows:

2.1 Main objectives

- (1) Collection of information for the in-depth stock assessment of sei whales, humpback whales and gray whales.
- (2) Collection of information on the rare North Pacific right and blue whales.
- (3) Collection of data on abundance and stock structure of other whale resources with insufficient resource information.
- (4) Collection of information necessary for the development of the medium- to long-term plan of this research program.

2.2 Research Cruise Period

From August 2 to September 30, 2021 (60 days, no port calls)

2.3 Research Area

Waters excluding foreign exclusive economic zones north of 40 degrees north, between 135 degrees and 155 degrees west longitude (Figure 1). There will be no port of call on this cruise.

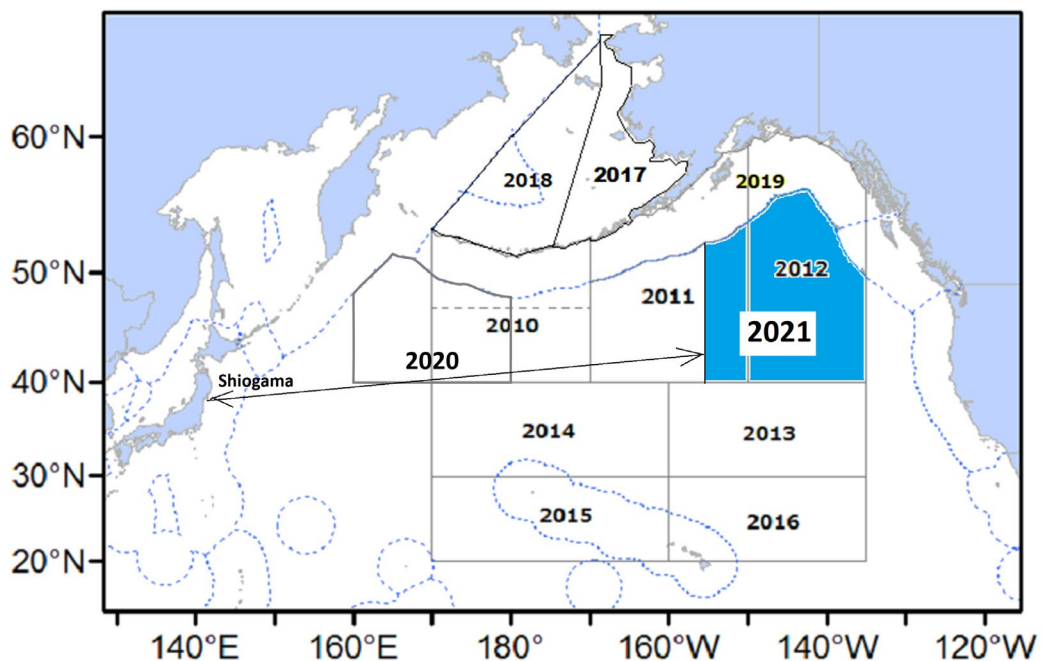


Figure 1. 2021 IWC-POWER survey area (blue) and course of round-trip voyage (black arrow). Other areas surveyed from 2010 to 2020 are also indicated.

2.4 International Researchers

The survey will be conducted by the following international researchers appointed by the IWC Scientific Committee.

Hiroto Murase (Cruise leader, Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology, Japan)

James Gilpatrick (Southwest Fisheries Science Center, NOAA/SWFSC, USA)

Isamu Yoshimura (IWC-nominated international researchers, Japan)

2.5 Research vessel

Yushin-Maru No. 2 (747 tons, Captain Hiroshi Eguchi, 16 crewmen).

2.6 Operating body

The Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR, Japan)

Photographs from previous IWC-POWER cruises (Copyright IWC/ICR).



- a) Blue whale biopsy sample collection experiment.
- b) Fin whale blow.
- c) Skin biopsy specimen taken from a humpback whale.
- d) A view of the biopsy experiment from the upper bridge.
- e) Vessel emergency evacuation drill.
- f) Killer whale dorsal fin.

END