MEDIA RELEASE
July 2, 2014

2014 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 (POWER) is a collaborative program started in 2010 after the conclusion of the International Whaling Commission Southern Ocean Whale and Ecosystem Research (IWC-SOWER) program carried out from 1996/1997 to 2009/2010 in the Antarctic.

In 2011 the IWC Scientific Committee annual meeting decided to name the new research program as the IWC-POWER (Pacific Ocean Whale Ecosystem Research). The POWER research program is appraised as an important component of the International Whaling Commission work. It is tasked by the IWC Scientific Committee and coordinated and directed by the IWC (http://iwc.int/power).

The IWC-SOWER program and its predecessor, the IDCR (International Decade for Cetacean Research, 1978/1979-1995/1996) were conducted in total for 32 consecutive years 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 IDCR and SOWER are recognized as the most successful international collaborative research effort conducted under the auspices of the IWC. Over the years, Japan has made a substantive contribution for the continuous implementation of these international whale research programs by providing research vessels and crew from the beginning to the end (http://iwc.int/sower).

Entering its fifth year and carried out in accordance with a research plan based on specific tasks set forth by the IWC Scientific Committee, since their beginning in 2010 the POWER research cruises are covering a wide area of the North Pacific that had not been surveyed for several decades, sighting a large number of fin and sei whales and collecting many valuable data including biopsy samples.

2. Outline of the 2014 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, which has the role to design the research plan and analyze 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.

2.1 Objectives

(1) Estimation of Bryde's, sei and fin whales abundance (and other whale species where possible);

(2) Collection of information of stock structure, particularly biopsy samples and photo-identification data, 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, 2014 to August 30, 2014 (60 days).

2.3 Research Area

The research area is north of 30ºN, south of 40ºN and between 170ºE and 160ºW (high seas area and USA EEZ, Fig. 1).

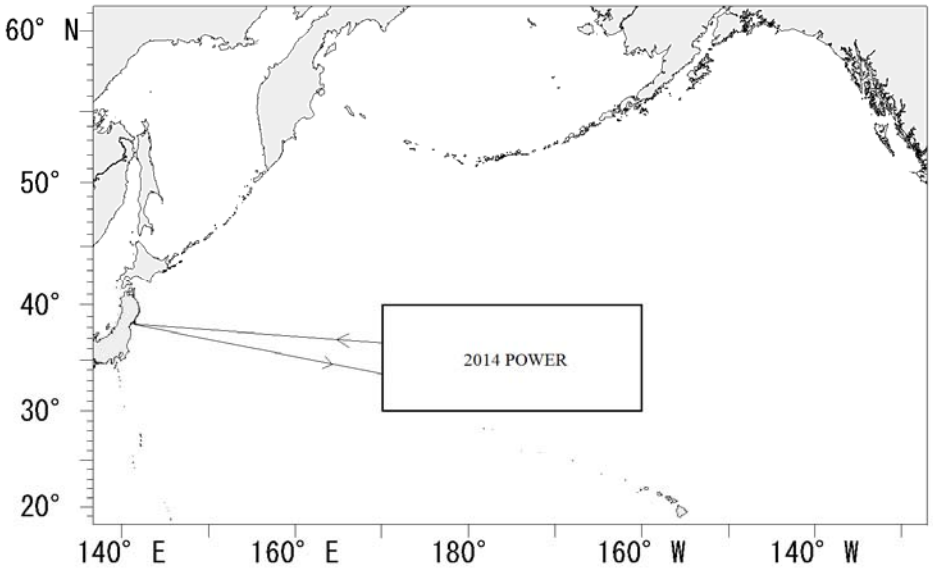

Fig. 1 The 2014 IWC-POWER research area.

2.4 International Researchers

IWC-POWER International researchers are nominated by the IWC Scientific Committee.

Koji Matsuoka (Cruise leader, Institute of Cetacean Research, Japan)
Sally Mizroch (Alaska Fisheries Science Center, NOAA/NMFS, USA)
Jessica Tailor (IWC nominated international researcher, UK)
Isamu Yoshimura (IWC nominated international researcher, Japan).

2.5 Research Vessel

Yushin-maru No. 3 (742 ton, Kyodo Senpaku Ltd. vessel, Captain Yoshiyuki Yamauchi, 17 crewmen).

2.6 Operating body

The Institute of Cetacean Research (Tokyo, Japan).

Photographs from the 2013 IWC-POWER cruise


a)


b)


c)


d)

a) Bryde's whale about to surface
b) Bryde's whale back and dorsal fin
c) Taking photographic record of a sperm whale
d) At the easternmost point of the research area (Yushin-maru No.3 upper bridge)