



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**September 25, 2017**

### **Completion of the 2017 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 as the *Pacific Ocean Whale and Ecosystem Research* (POWER) under auspices of the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

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 2017 survey was the eighth 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 first seven cruises, a number of fin, sei, Bryde's, humpback and sperm whales were sighted in the research area, where a large scale sighting survey had not been conducted for more than a half century.

#### **2. OUTLINE OF THE 2017 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 Alaskan Fisheries Science Center, NOAA/NMFS, USA 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. For the 2017 cruise, the acoustic survey was introduced for the first time to acoustically monitor for the presence of marine mammals, with particular importance for North Pacific right whale localizations. Port of the Dutch Harbor, Alaska, USA was used for shipping, re-fueling and boarding international researchers.

## 2.1 Main objectives

- (1) estimation of sei, humpback and gray whales abundance (and other species where possible);
- (2) collection of information on stock structure, particularly biopsy samples, with priority given to sei, humpback and gray whales (and other species);
- (3) completion of coverage of the northern range of fin whales following on from the IWC-POWER cruises in 2010-12; and
- (4) collection of photo-identification data and biopsy samples for rare species encountered, especially North Pacific right whales.
- (5) essential information for the development of the medium-long term international programme in the North Pacific in order to meet the Commission's long-term objectives.

## 2.2 Research Cruise Period

From July 3 to September 25, 2017 (85 days).

## 2.3 Research Area (Fig. 1)

The research area is north of the Aleutian Islands, south of 66°N, between longitudes 175° W and 157°W (US-EEZ).

## 2.4 International Researchers

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

Jessica Crance (Alaskan Fisheries Science Center, NOAA/NMFS, USA)

Jessica Taylor (IWC nominated researcher, USA)

Isamu Yoshimura (IWC nominated researcher, Japan)

## 2.5 Research Vessel

*Yushin-maru* No.2 (747 ton, Captain Hidenori Kasai)

## 2.6 Total Distance Covered

1,990 nautical miles (about 3,685 km)

## 2.7 Main whale sightings (including transit surveys)

Fin whale: 145 schools; 198 animals

Humpback whale: 136 schools; 165 animals

Common minke whale: 17 schools; 20 animals

Gray whale: 15 schools; 22 animals

North Pacific right whale: 7 schools; 15 animals

Sperm whale: 25 schools; 33 animals

Killer whale: 32 schools; 134 animals

Dalli Type Dall's porpoise: 29 schools; 149 animals

## 2.8 Results of sample collections etc.

### (1) Photo identification data

Gray whale: 14 animals

North Pacific right whale: 12 animals

Humpback whale 34 animals

Fin whale 55 animals

Killer whale 56 animals

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

### (2) Collection of biopsy samples

Fin whale: 28 animal

Humpback whale: 18 animal

Gray whale: 9 animals

North Pacific right whale: 3 animals

Killer whale: 2 animals

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

### (3) Collection of acoustic data collection

A total of 240 sonobuoys were deployed for a total of 841:05:06 monitoring hours.

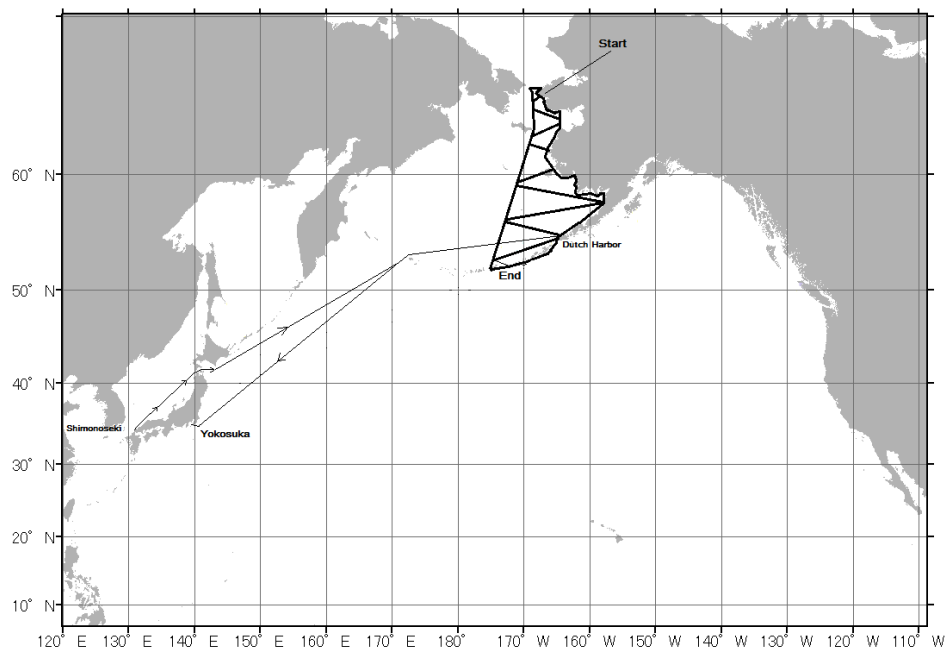


Fig.1 Research area and trackline for the 2017 IWC-POWER survey.