

MEDIA RELEASE

Designated Corporation for Scientific Whale Research

THE INSTITUTE OF CETACEAN RESEARCH

August 1, 2024

2024 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 fourteen years, the IWC-POWER research cruises have widely surveyed mainly the Northeast Pacific and 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 of these species. In addition, distribution information on rare species such as blue whales and right whales has also been collected.

As the 15th cruise, with the generous cooperation of the U.S. government, this time we will conduct a survey for the first time in the Arctic Ocean (southern part of the Chukchi Sea: within the U.S. EEZ), as well as in the eastern Bering Sea (south of 69th parallel N latitude, north of the Aleutian Islands, east of 175° W longitude, and west of the 155° W longitude line, within the exclusive economic zone of the United States), from August 2 to October 10. The survey will be conducted by a total of four researchers, two each from U.S. and from Japan.

2. Outline of the 2024 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 established the IWC-POWER Steering Group (Convenor: Koji Matsuoka, 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. The outline of this year's survey plan is as follows:

2.5 Research vessel

Yushin-Maru No. 2 (747 tons, Captain Hidenori Kasai, 16 crewmen).

2.6 Operating body

The Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR, Japan)

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



Blue whale breathing at sea surface (2022)



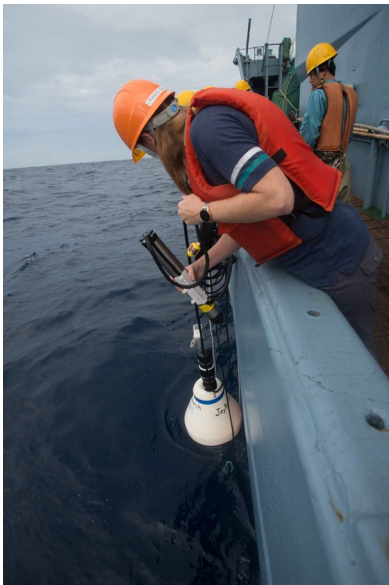
Head of a rare North Pacific rare whale (2023)



A fin whale surfacing. The right lower jaw is white (2023)



Caudal fin of a humpback whale photographed near the Aleutian Islands (2022)



International researcher deploying U.S.-made acoustic observation equipment (2023)



Observers and international researchers confirming whale species from the observation platform (2023)

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