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For Promotion of Sustainable Use of Whale Resources for Mankind

JARPN II Continues to Provide Valuable Info on Whale Feeding Ecology in N.W. Pacific

The second-phase whale research catch program in the offshore area of the northwestern Pacific (JARPNII) for this year ended on September 18, by gaining advanced knowledge on feeding ecology of whales in the area.

This research, conducted by the Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR), is pursuant to Article VIII of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, authorizing member Government to grant permit for catch of whales for scientific purposes.

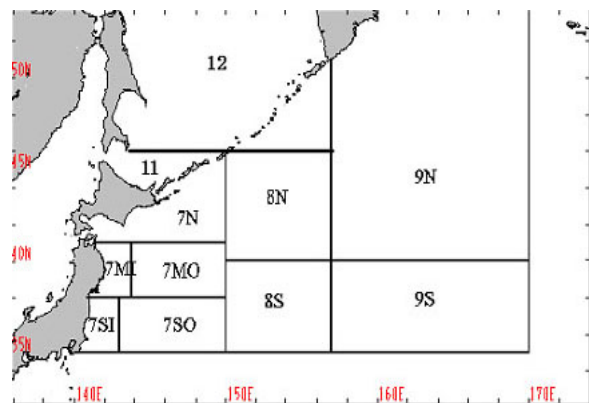
The areas researched were the offshore area from off Sanriku, northern Japan, to the area south of the Kamtchatka Peninsula. During the research period, started on June 10, a total of 100 minke whales, 50 Brydes whales, 100 sei whales and 3 sperm whales were sampled.

Japan's whale research catch program was initiated in 1994 with the purpose of elucidating the stock structure of minke whales in the region. However, in the course of the research,

it became clear that whales are feeding large quantities of fishery resources. In the second-phase of the research, started in 2000, major attention was shifted to clarify the impact of whale feeding habit on fishery resources. In this phase of the research, Bryde's whales and sperm whales



Large quantities of anchovy found in the stomach of a minke whale



Research Area for JARPN II

were added as species to be sampled. In 2002, sei whales were added to the list of samples. In addition to the offshore area, research in the coastal area where competition between whales and fisheries is conspicuous was added.

Major findings from the research in this season indicated that minke whales mainly feed on relatively large fishes such as Pacific saury, Pacific flying squid, pomfret, and chum salmon; Bryde's whales fed on anchovy and mackerel; sei whales extensively consume zooplankton, such as copepods. Further, results that sperm whales mainly feed on squid in the offshore area, where relatively small amount of information had been available.

In the sighting surveys, a considerable number of blue whales, fin whales, right whales and humpback whales were sighted.

Further, the research in the coastal area, conducted off Kushiro, Hokkaido, from September 13, was completed on October 31, with a total of 59 minke whales being sampled despite adverse weather conditions. A total of 156 whales of 151 schools were sighted. It was confirmed that the stomach contents of minke whales were mostly anchovy in September and Pacific saury in October.

Based on the findings both in the offshore and coastal areas, the Japanese government intends to develop a new

management scheme (ecosystem-based comprehensive management scheme) envisaging not only cetacean resources but all fishery resources in the future.

The large amount of scientific information gathered from Japan's research both in the Antarctic and the North Pacific have been presented for the deliberation by the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission, and highly rated by the scientific community. The results of the research will also be reported to the 57th annual meeting of the IWC Scientific Committee next June. (Photos by courtesy of the Institute of Cetacean Research, Tokyo)



A blue whale sighted during the survey

Support Votes Increase for Proposed Alleviation on Minke Whale Trade at CITES COP13

International understanding on sustainable use of whales was visibly advanced at the 13th meeting of the Conference of Parties of the Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES COP13) as Japan's two whale-related proposals garnered the largest ever number of support votes, according to Japanese NGO source at the meeting.

The biennial meeting was held from October 2 to 14 at Queen Sirikit Convention Center, Bangkok, Thailand. It was attended by 152 out of its total 166 Contracting Parties. From Japan, a delegation of over 30 members from the related government offices attended. Seven private fisheries-related organizations, including the Japan Whaling Association, attended as observers to make an appeal for sustainable use of marine living resources under a unified banner of "SUSTAINABLE USE JAPAN."

What follows are the results of discussion on Japanese proposal related to whales at the meeting.

(1) Proposal for CITES to urge the IWC for an expedited completion of RMS

This agenda item was discussed at the Committee I on October 12. Japan's proposal has been aimed at enabling

CITES to make decisions on trade regulation of whales in accordance with its Appendixes expeditiously. At present, the most important reason given for the prohibition of international trade even for abundant whale species is that the commercial whaling moratorium is continued at the IWC and the Revised Management Scheme (RMS) has not been completed. Therefore, Japan called on CITES to press the IWC for an early completion of the RMS. Both views for and against the proposal were presented, and, the proposal was put to vote and was defeated with 57 in support, 63 against and 13 abstentions.

(2) Proposal to downlist minke whales from Appendix I to II

Japan proposed to downlist the Northern Hemisphere minke whale, now in Appendix I providing for a total prohibition of trading, to Appendix II that allows for conditional trading. Japan's proposal is primarily based on the fact that the present abundant state of Northern Hemisphere minke whales does not comply with Appendix I category. The vote result was 55 in support, 67 against and 14 abstentions.

Watchers of CITES debate so far consider that international understanding on sustainable use of whales has further expanded because both proposals, although defeated, gained the largest number of support. Secret voting was adopted, at the request of Japan, on those proposals with a view to exclude unjustified pressures on developing countries from some conservationist-oriented Western nations and animal welfare groups.

On other fronts, Japanese fisheries sources expressed a concern about an apparent trend in CITES toward its greater involvement in the management of marine species, which, they see, would call for adequate caution from the viewpoint of sustainable users.

The COP14 will be held in the Netherlands in 2006.



Symposium to Commemorate the Centenary of Antarctic Whaling

On December 2, an international symposium to mark the centenary of the beginning of the Antarctic whaling was held in Tokyo. The symposium, organized by the Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR), was aimed at reviewing the modern whaling which thrived in the Antarctic during the past century and explore the possibility of new whaling in the future.

Three guest speakers from abroad delivered keynote speeches. Dr. Lars Wallow, Professor of the Department of Medicine of Oslo University, spoke on the Norwegian Whaling in the Antarctic in Early Years and its Development;



Mr. Klaus Balthelmes, a researcher of whaling history, elaborated on the history of competition over whale oil between Norway and Britain/Germany; and Dr. Ray Gambell, former Secretary of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), outlined the history of the international regulations on whaling to the present day.

From Japan, Dr. Seiji Ohsumi, adviser to the ICR, delivered a speech on "Development of the Japanese-type whaling to the Antarctic: Its History and the Future." Ohsumi emphasized that the Antarctic whaling was an important means of food production for Japan, saying that the sense of gratitude among Japanese toward whales still remain unchanged. Regarding the objective and significance of whale research catch programs Japan has been carrying out in the Antarctic after the adoption of the IWC'S commercial whaling moratorium in 1982, Ohsumi pointed out, among other things, (1) its contribution to the progress in whale science, (2) improvement of management of whale resources and (3) succession and development of whaling techniques.

Based on these premises, Dr. Ohsumi proposed that "new Japanese-style whaling should uphold the principle of

sustainable utilization based on the recognition that whale resources in the Antarctic are common property of mankind." "The benefit brought about by whales should be used to contribute to the welfare of mankind," he added.

After the speeches, a panel discussion among the keynote speakers was held, with Mr. Masayuki Komatsu, Director of Resource and Environment Research of the Fisheries Agency, serving as coordinator, and then active question and answer session from the participants followed.

Korean Delegation Visits LDP Whaling Group

A delegation of municipal assembly members from the southern Korean city of Ulsan visited on October 20 the office of the Parliamentary League for the Promotion of Whaling of the ruling Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP) to exchange views on the coming 57th annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) scheduled to be held in that city in June 2005.

At the meeting, attended by six of the League members, the League president Shunichi Suzuki told the 18-man delegation that "Japan and Korea share the same recognition that fishery resources should be used based on scientific findings. Also, both countries have a long history of whale diet culture." Bearing this in mind, Suzuki called on Korea to work together for the goal of realization of sustainable whaling at the IWC, despite the current anomalous climate of the commission characterized by a stark confrontation between pro-sustainable use group and anti-whaling countries.

Suzuki also said that the League places emphasis on diplomatic efforts by its members. "Whenever the members of the League visit overseas, they try to seize the opportunity to promote understanding of sustainable use



of marine living resources, including whales," he said.

Touching on the general meeting of the Sustainable Use Parliamentarians Union (SUPU), held annually prior to the IWC meeting, Yoshimasa Hayashi, the League's Secretary, requested the Korean delegates to encourage participation

of as many Korean Parliamentarians as possible in SUPU. On the annual meeting, Hayashi advised it is important that not only the government officials but also ordinary citizens should act as hosts of the meeting."(Photo: by courtesy of Suisan Times Co.)

ANTARCTIC KRILL RESOURCE STABLE AT HIGH LEVEL --ICR Rebut Reports on Krill Decrease--

A paper published in Nature on 4 November 2004 (See Note below) reported that the density of Antarctic Krill has declined since the 1970s and that this decrease could interfere with the recovery of whale stocks. This paper was cited by some news articles with significant misquotations and misinterpretations and some of them emphasized that an 80% decrease of Krill occurred in the Antarctic Ocean.

In a press release dated 19 November, 2004, Dr. Hiroshi Hatanaka, Director-General of the Institute of Cetacean Research, who is also Japanese senior scientist to the IWC Scientific Committee, refuted such misleading reports, on the basis of the following four points:

- 1.** The paper published in Nature states that the 80% decrease of Antarctic Krill resources was observed only in a specific area of the Scotia Sea, not in the whole Antarctic Ocean as suggested in the news article. The original paper also states that decrease of Antarctic Krill in the whole Scotia Sea is 38% from the '70s.
- 2.** The estimate of Krill biomass in Scotia Sea and the Indian Ocean is available, but there is no accurate information on krill biomass in the whole Antarctic Ocean because no estimate has been conducted for other large areas of the Antarctic Ocean.
- 3.** The trend of density of krill resources appears to indicate decline, but also shows sharp increases in each several years. Further, in a research survey on density of Krill resources conducted using acoustic survey (as part of Japan's Whale Research Program under Special Permit in the Antarctic, JARPA), no apparent increase or decrease trend in Krill density has been observed. Therefore, we considered that the Antarctic Krill resource has kept stable at high level.
- 4.** Regarding whale resources, their abundance trend is different by species. For example, the number of blue whales decreased from 200 thousand in the past to 1,700 in the

present. On the other hand, the Antarctic minke whale increased from 80 thousand to 760 thousand. Besides, increasing trends of abundance have been revealed for many whale resources including fin and humpback whales by JARPA.

(Note: Long-term decline in the krill stock and increase in salps within the Southern Ocean, Nature, Volume 43 2, PP 100- 103, November 2004)

Japan Alleviates Rules on the Use of Stranded Whales --Government regulations revised effective from October 12--

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries revised its ministry decrees effective October 12, 2004, to permit, subject to some conditions, the catch and use of baleen and other whales that were stranded on Japan's shore. Under the new decree, the stranded animals would be placed under the control of the regional government provisionally, and the parties concerned in the region, including fisheries co-operative associations, are to decide on the use after consultations among them.

It is required to make efforts to rescue the stranded whales in the first place, but when it is not possible, the use is allowed under either of the following conditions: (1) animals are found already dead; (2) animals are liable to cause harm to the people; (3) animals are unlikely to recover because of injuries, etc. and (4) animals showed no movement 48 hours after being stranded. In using those animals, reports on the stranding situation and the results of DNA analysis are required.

Previously, the use of stranded whales other than those caught incidentally by set-nets had not been permitted. It is believed that the change in the ministry decrees came as an increasing number of cetaceans have been stranded lately and it is becoming difficult both physically and economically to rescue and dispose of the corpses.