OUTLINE OF JAPANESE WHALE SIGHTING CRUISES IN THE NORTH PACIFIC IN 1992 AND PLANS FOR 1993

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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines Japanese whale sighting surveys in the North Pacific region in 1992 and plans for 1993. The National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries conducted a total of six cruises (each cruise lasted two months) in the northwestern region of the North Pacific, Okhotsk Sea and Sea of Japan in mid-summer 1992 and will conduct a survey in temperate waters in the western North Pacific in early spring 1993. We also propose a research plan in mid-summer 1993, however research permits from Russia and U.S.A. to enable conduct of the survey within their 200 miles zones are key factors for the plan.

In order to study distribution and abundance of all cetaceans and to monitor the changes in abundance of some important whales and dolphins, the National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries, Fisheries Agency of Japan, have conducted line transect sighting cruises in the North Pacific each summer.


We have conducted whale sighting surveys which covered the temperate zone through waters off the Pacific coast of Japan to off the west coast of North America from the mid 1980s to 1991. Major objectives were mainly estimations of abundance of dolphins and porpoises incidentally taken by high seas squid drift net operations. In 1992, however, we returned to the survey of whales and dolphins migrating to adjacent waters of Japan due to cessation of the drift net operations. Subsequently a survey was carried out using six vessels in the northwestern North Pacific, Okhotsk Sea and Sea of Japan in mid-summer (from end of July to end of September), as listed in Table 1. Cruise tracks of these vessels in 1992 are given in Fig.1.

In 1992 we initially planned to allocate three vessels, Kyomaru #1, Shonan-maru #2 and Toshimaru #25 to the Okhotsk Sea, off western Kamchatka, Kuril Islands waters and western Bering Sea, with a major aim of sighting minke whales and Dall's porpoises. However, only a single vessel, the Kyomaru #1, could obtain permission to survey the within the 200 miles zone of Russia, and
the permitted area was also limited to the Okhotsk Seas. Thus, we reallocated the *Shonan-maru #2* and *Toshi-maru #25* to temperate and subtropical waters (Fig.1). The *Kyo-maru #1* and *Shonan-maru #2* conducted biopsy of minke whales in addition to the line transect sighting surveys.

The *Toshi-maru #18* surveyed the Sea of Japan including EEZ of the Republic of Korea and biopsy of minke whales was attempted during the cruise. In addition to the ordinary whale sightings, the *Shinhoyo-maru* hand-harpooned striped dolphins to collect biochemical and skeletal samples for stock identification in coastal and offshore waters.

The research vessel, *Shunyo-maru* conducted a sighting survey in coastal waters along the Pacific coast of northern Japan from 32 to 42 North. Her cruise targeted mainly Baird's beaked whales and short-finned pilot whales (northern form) which are objectives of Japanese small type whaling.

In addition to the cruises above, we have plans to conduct a sighting cruise for humpback whales in their wintering ground between Bonin (about 27 N-142 E) and Ryukyu Islands (about 27 N-128 E) using a catcher boat type vessel in February to March 1993.


In 1993, we will conduct similar sighting surveys as initially planned for this year, including biopsy of minke whales in the Okhotsk Sea, Sea of Japan and coastal waters of the Pacific coast of Japan (Fig.2). The sighting survey in the Okhotsk Sea and western Bering Sea is indispensable for population studies of minke whales, Dall's porpoise and other cetaceans in the western North Pacific. As shown in Fig.2, considerable parts of these area are within the 200 miles zones of Russia and the United States of America, and research permits from these governments are key factors for the full accomplishment of the research plan.
Table 1. List of Japanese whale sightings cruises in the North Pacific in the 1992 season. Cruise tracks, except one cruise, are shown in Fig.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vessel name and type (GT)</th>
<th>Research period</th>
<th>Researcher*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kyo-maru #1 catcher boat (812.8GT)</td>
<td>Aug.2 - Sept.28</td>
<td>T.Miyashita (IFS) A.Brokhin (USSR) K.Hosonuma (FAJ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toshi-maru #18 catcher boat (758.3GT)</td>
<td>July 29 - Sept.24</td>
<td>H.Shimada (IFS) K.Ishii (FAJ) H.Takeda (FAJ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shinsho-yo maru tuna long liner (495.5GT)</td>
<td>July 27 - Sept.23</td>
<td>S.Yuzu (FAJ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shunyo-maru R/V (393.4GT)</td>
<td>July 31 - Sept.22</td>
<td>T.Iwasaki (IFS) T.Kishiro (IFS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toshi-maru #25 catcher boat (739.9GT)</td>
<td>July 28 - Sept.24</td>
<td>K.Matsuoka (ICR) H.Ishikawa (ICR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shonan-maru #2 catcher boat (916.4GT)</td>
<td>July 29 - Sept.28</td>
<td>R.S.Pastine (ICR) M.Ito (ICR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unspecified catcher boat (ca650GT)</td>
<td>Feb.4 - March 24, 1993</td>
<td>H.Kato (IFS) T.Miyashita (IFS)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*) IFS, National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries; FAJ, Fisheries Agency of Japan; ICR, Institute of cetacean Research.
Fig. 1 Cruise tracks of Japanese whale sightings cruises in the North Pacific in mid-summer 1992. Abbreviations are: KY1, Kyogame #1; HSI, Shinhoyo-maru; T18, Toshi-maru #18; T25, Toshi-maru #25; SM2, Shonan-maru #2; SHU, Shunyo-maru.
Fig. 2 Proposed research area (hatched area) for Japanese whale sightings cruises in the North Pacific in 1993.