

# PROPOSAL FOR THE 2012 IWC/JAPAN JOINT CETACEAN SIGHTING SURVEY CRUISE IN THE NORTH PACIFIC

## THE STEERING GROUP

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## BACKGROUND

During the 61<sup>st</sup> annual meeting of the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission (IWC SC) in 2009, Japan presented a proposal and preliminary plan for a mid- to long-term research programme involving sighting surveys to provide information for cetacean stock management in the North Pacific. The IWC SC welcomed the initiative and agreed the value of a large-scale, middle-long term integrated research programme in the North Pacific and strongly encouraged this in the context of international collaboration under IWC auspices. The IWC SC recommended that the planning process should start with a review of the current discussions on North Pacific issues within the Committee and a careful examination of available information and identification of gaps in knowledge (IWC, 2010a).

The IWC SC has been conducting the international whale sighting survey program in the Southern Hemispheres every year since 1978/79 Antarctic season as the International Decade of Cetacean Research Program (IWC/IDCR: 1978/79-1995/96 seasons), and as the Southern Ocean Whale and Ecosystem Research (IWC/SOWER: 1996/97-2009/10 seasons) (IWC, 2010a).

To start the organization of this research programme the IWC SC established an intersessional group with the following terms of references (TORs) (IWC, 2010a):

- (1) Review the Committee's issues in the North Pacific and circulate a paper before the next Annual Meeting.
- (2) Review the past and ongoing survey activities and available data in range states from completed pro forma.
- (3) Consider possible line transect survey plan and additional data collection (e.g. photo ID and biopsy) for 2010 season.
- (4) Prepare proposal for intersessional workshop (between SC62 and SC63) on future surveys beyond 2011.

To initiate and review progress of the work related to those TORs, an intersessional meeting (IM) was held in Tokyo on 27 September, 2009. The IM reviewed progress for each of the TORs listed above. In particular, the IM initiated discussions about medium-long- term objectives of the research programme. Specific group was identified to complete the works related to TORs (1) and (2) above. Another group was identified to make a proposal for an intersessional workshop to plan for a mid-to long-term programme within the North Pacific (TOR (4) above). The report of the IM was presented at the 62<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting of IWC SC (IWC, 2010b).

Regarding TOR (3) above the IM discussed and agreed on a survey cruise plan for 2010. The 2010 research plan (Kato *et al.*, 2010) was presented to the 62<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting of IWC SC. After the meeting, the research cruise of the IWC/Japan Joint Cetacean Sighting Survey in the North Pacific was conducted successfully in 2010 summer (Matsuoka *et al.*, 2010).

At the 62<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting of IWC SC, it was also agreed that a planning meeting for the 2011 research cruise and mid- to long- term objectives for the programme would be held in Tokyo from late September to early October 2010 (IWC, 2010c). The planning meeting was held from 28 September to 1 October 2010, and general discussion on the 2011 cruise plan was made there. At the meeting, a small discussion group was formed to develop a detailed plan for the 2011 research cruise by the end of November 2010,

and also formed to develop a detailed plan for the 2012-2015 short term research cruises by the SC63. This document outlines the research cruise plan for the 2012 IWC/Japan Joint Cetacean Sighting Survey in the North Pacific following the general guidelines agreed at the planning meeting (IWC, 2010c).

## **CRUISE PLAN FOR 2012**

### **Research area and rationale**

The cruise will be conducted in summer 2012 in the area between 140°W and 135°W (showed in Figure 1) for the following reason:

This area has been poorly covered by previous surveys (see Figure 1) and not at all in recent decades thus representing an important information gap for several large whale species.

The cruise will be focused on the collection of line transect data to estimate abundance and biopsy/photo-identification data, would make a valuable contribution to the work of the Scientific Committee on the management and conservation of populations of large whales in the North Pacific in a number of ways, including:

- (a) providing information for the proposed future in-depth assessment of sei whales in terms of both abundance and stock structure;
- (b) providing information relevant to *Implementation Reviews* of whales (e.g. common minke whales) in terms of both abundance and stock structure;
- (c) providing baseline information on distribution and abundance for a poorly known area for several large whale species/populations, including those that were known to have been depleted in the past but whose status is unclear;
- (d) providing biopsy samples and photo-identification photos to contribute to discussions of stock structure for several large whale species/populations, including those that were known to have been depleted in the past but whose status is unclear;
- (e) providing essential information for a medium-long term international programme in the North Pacific.

### **Recent surveys in the Western North Pacific**

Figure 1 show the areas in the North Pacific, which have been covered by cetacean scientific surveys in recent years. The proposed research area for the 2012 survey (in dark blue) has not been surveyed previously.

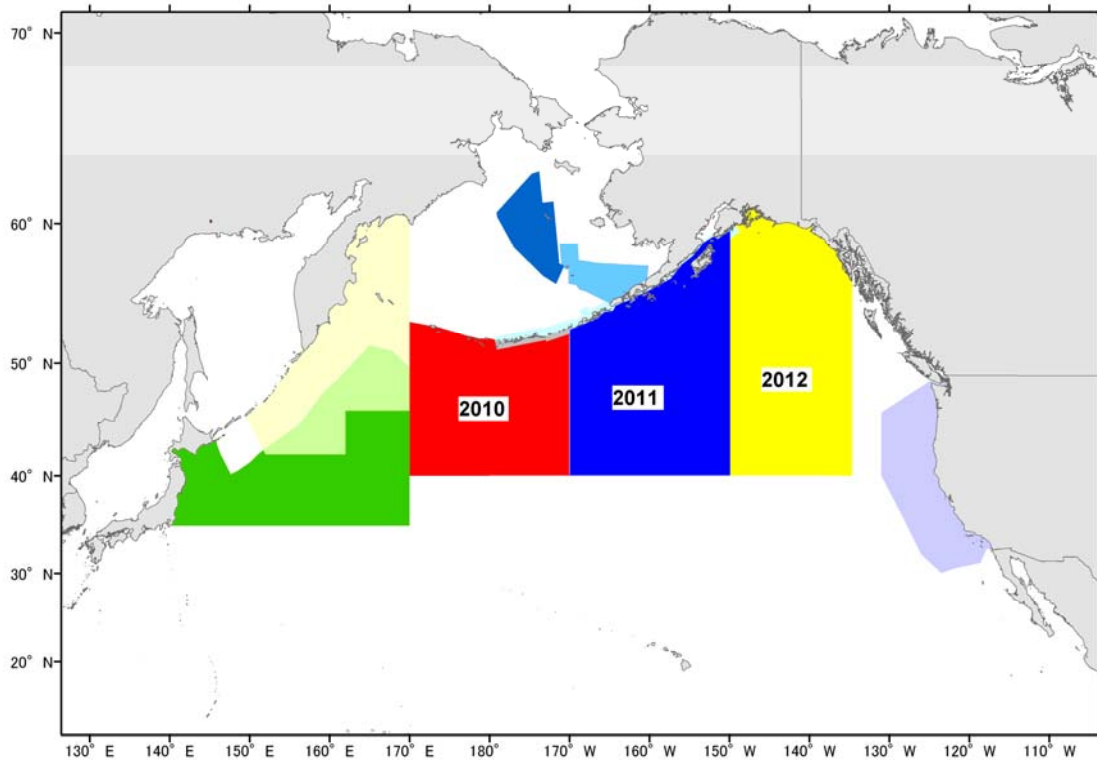


Figure 1. Proposed research area for the 2012 sighting survey (yellow). The 2010 and 2011 research areas of the cruises are shown in red and dark blue, respectively. Other coloured areas represent surveys conducted in the North Pacific in recent years: in 1999 (purple) and 2000 (blue) by Moore *et al.* (2002), in 2001-2003 (sky blue) by Zerbini *et al.* (2007), in 2001 and 2005 (pink) by Barlow and Forney (2007), in 2005 (light yellow) by Miyashita (2006). Sighting surveys have been conducted in the green area since 1994 as a part of JARPN II (Pastene *et al.*, 2009).

#### Distribution of previous catches of large whales in the proposed research area

To examine the possibility of encounter with large whale species in the proposed survey area the distribution of previous catches in that North Pacific was plotted (Appendix 1). This was done for blue, fin, sei and humpback whales using the catch data recorded in the IWC database (ver. 4.0). There are no minke and right whale catch records in the database for the proposed survey area. From the plotting it can be noted that the research area match the catch distribution for the species examined.

Information collected from this single survey will provide essential information for the intersessional workshop to plan for a medium-long term international programme in the North Pacific.

#### Stratification of the research area and trackline in the research area

Figure 2 shows the planned stratification and trackline for the 2012 survey. The survey area is divided into northern and southern stratum at the US and Canadian EEZs (grey coloured area in the research area represent the EEZs). Every location within the study area has an equal probability of being sampled which is calculated by the software "DISTANCE". For this aim the starting points of transect lines within the study area were randomized following IWC SC guidelines (Hammond and Donovan, 2004). Outer limit of US and Canadian EEZs is provided by NOAA Office of Coast Survey and the data are available from [http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/csdl/docs/GIS\\_EEZ\\_Alaska.zip](http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/csdl/docs/GIS_EEZ_Alaska.zip).

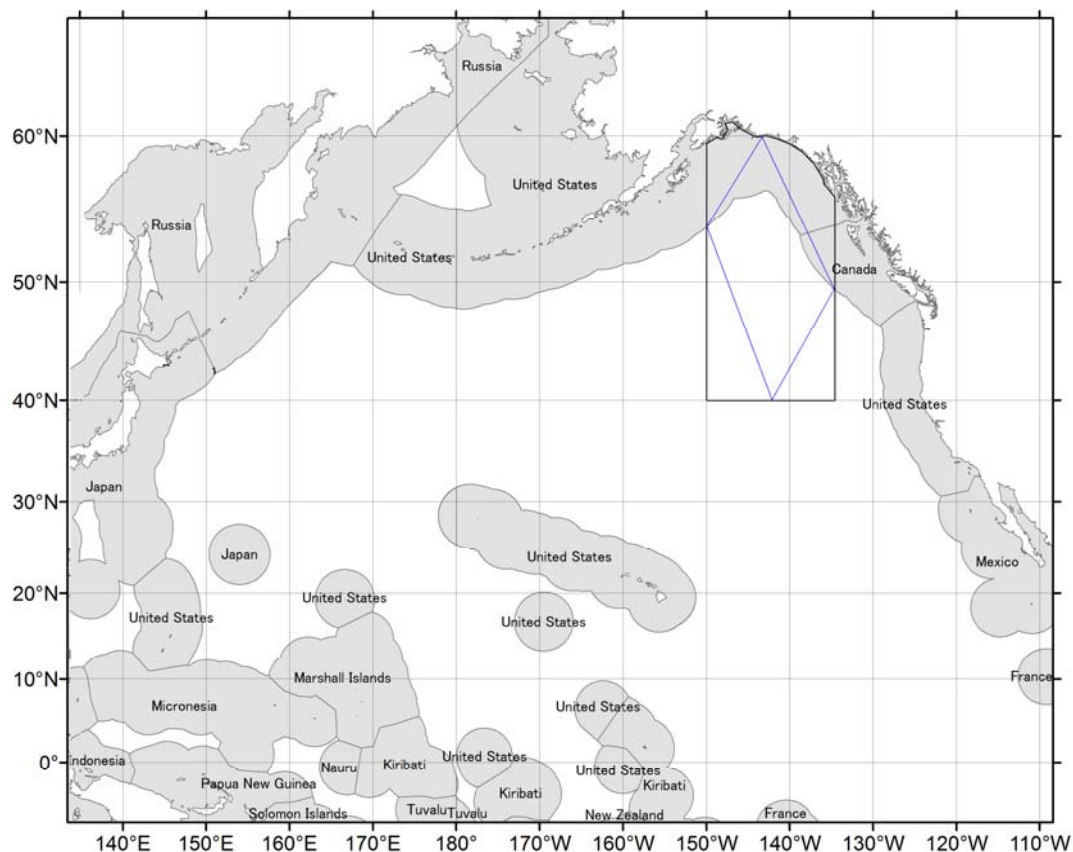


Figure 2. Proposed research area (from north of 40°N to the continent between 150°W and 135°W) and provisional pre-determined trackline for the 2012 survey with the outer limit of US and Canadian EEZs. The survey area is divided into northern and southern stratum at EEZ boundaries.

### Cruise track and itinerary

Following is a tentative cruise plan because budget from Government of Japan is a provisional at this moment. A total cruise of about 60 days (i.e. including transit time) represents the maximum operation period of the vessel without refuelling/resupplying. In order to adequately cover the longitudinal range 150°W to 135°W, it would be necessary to restrict the latitudinal range. Based on past JSV data and catch data, it could be considered that a southern boundary at 40°N and a northern boundary at the continent would incorporate the expected latitudinal range of sei whales at that time of the year and allow sufficient coverage.

The cruise will take place in July and August and will involve about 21 day-transit to and from the research area and thus some 39 days of research. Based on experience elsewhere in the North Pacific, allowing for poor conditions and time for photo-identification and biopsy sampling work should enable for an average of about 70 n.miles per day to be covered in primary searching effort (almost the same as the 2011 cruise). Table 1 shows a tentative itinerary for the 2012 cruise.

Table 1. Tentative itinerary for the 2012 cruise (about 60days).

Date	Event
xx July 2012	Vessel departs Shiogama, northern Japan
xx July 2012	Vessel arrives in the research area to the starting point at 150°00'W
xx August 2012	Vessel completes the research at 150°00'W
xx September 2012	Vessel arrives Shiogama, northern Japan

## Research vessel

The research vessel, *Yushin-Maru No.3* (YS3) would be engaged for this cruise. The YS3 is equipped with a top barrel platform (TOP) and upper bridge. The ICR research data collecting system (Japanese survey version) is set onboard the vessel. Searching will occur at the most comfortable cruising speed normally 11.5 knots. It will have space for three or four researchers. Specification of the YS3 is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Specification of the YS3.

<i>Yushin-Maru No.3</i>	
Call sign	7JCH
Length overall [m]	69.61
Molded breadth [m]	10.80
Gross tonnage (GT)	742
Barrel height [m]	19.5
Upper bridge height [m]	11.5
Bow height [m]	6.5
Engine power [PS / kW]	5280 / 3900

## International researchers

The *Yushin-Maru No.3* can accommodate maximum four researchers. An appropriate researcher from each of the US, Republic of Korea, Japan and another country would participate in the 2012 survey cruise. The steering group of this cruise which established in the IWC SC will nominate these researchers.

All researchers must submit their personal details, including Last Name, First Name, Sex (M/F), Nationality, Date of Birth (Y/M/D), Institute, Address, TEL, FAX, E-mail, Passport No., Language, Survey experience (Y/N); Line Transect: (Y/N), Biopsy: (Y/N), Photo-ID: (Y/N), Acoustics: (Y/N).

Researchers will need to bring their own protective clothing, computers, office supply as in previous years. The daily subsistence charge aboard the vessel will be ¥2,500 per day for each researcher.

## Details of the cruise

### *Survey modes and length of research days*

Activities onboard the ship are classified into two principal groups: on-effort and off-effort. On-effort activities are times when full search effort is being executed and conditions (such as weather and sea conditions) are within acceptable parameters to conduct research. Off-effort activities are all activities that are not on-effort. All sightings recorded while the ship is on-effort are classified as primary sightings. All other sightings are secondary sightings.

On-effort sightings survey research is conducted by the two principal modes — Closing Mode and Passing Mode) - are scheduled for specific legs during the survey of the research area. Sighting effort is conducted by the two primary observers, researchers and the chief engineer or deputies are also present. Primary search effort is only conducted in acceptable weather conditions. These conditions are used as guidelines; in some circumstances, less severe conditions may still be inappropriate for search effort (see below). IO mode is used under the appropriate number of primary observers depend on the availability of the budget.

The following sections describe each of the survey modes. Research hours during the cruise will be the same as on recent SOWER cruises (from 6:00-18:00; begin 60 minutes after sunrise and end 60 minutes before sunset, with a maximum 12 hours per day). As in the SOWER programme, for biopsy sampling/photo-identification work on priority species (sei, common minke, right, blue, humpback, fin, with higher priority to the former two species in this cruise –see items (a) and (b) in page 2-) there may be occasions when it is beneficial to extend research outside the normal research hours. The basis for such special extension of research hours will involve mutual agreement between the captain and cruise leader

and an allocation of equivalent time-off the following morning or evening. Details of photo-identification and biopsy works are shown below.

The research day in transits will begin 30 minutes after sunrise and end 30 minutes before sunset, with a maximum of a 12-hour research day. Time-zone changes will be in 30-minute intervals, coming into effect at midnight.

#### *Number of crew on effort*

Two topmen observe from the barrel at all times in closing mode. Two primary observers will be in the barrel whenever full searching effort by reticles binoculars with the angle board is conducted. Two primary observers (captain and helmsman) will be at the upper bridge by binoculars with reticles, regardless of the research mode. Also present on the upper bridge, whenever the sighting survey is conducted, will normally be the chief engineer (or an alternate). There will be four researchers on the vessel. During survey, the number of researchers searching from the Upper Bridge should be standardised.

#### *Acceptable conditions*

The usual guidelines for acceptable conditions will apply, i.e. visibility (to see a minke whale) is greater than 2.0 n.miles and wind speed is <21 knots; the sea state should be <Beaufort 6.

#### *Estimated angle and distance training and experiment*

The experiment is designed to calibrate and identify any biases in individual observers' estimation of angle and distance. The experiment should be conducted during weather and sea conditions representative of the conditions encountered during the survey. The detailed protocol can be found in the Guide for Researchers.

#### *Data format*

The survey will be conducted using the same data forms as on the SOWER cruise (see the Guide for Researchers) and the 2010 cruise data forms (Anon, 2010).

#### *Biopsy sampling*

As appropriate and decided by the Cruise Leader, research time will be given for biopsy sampling of sei, common minke, right, blue, humpback, grey, bowhead and fin whales (Bryde's whales are unlikely to be seen north of 40°N), with higher priority given to the former two species in this cruise (see items (1) and (2) in page 2). Biopsy of killer and sperm whales will be attempted on an opportunistic basis.

Biological sample collection will occur from large vessel surveys using biopsy sampling (skin/blubber collected by projectile dart). Projectile biopsies will be collected using either a compound crossbow or the Larsen gun system. During any single encounter, no more than five biopsy sampling attempts per individual will be made. It is rare that an animal would be targeted for biopsy more than twice during one encounter, but we conservatively request five sample attempts to allow for occasional low success rates. If signs of harassment such as rapid changes in direction, prolonged diving and other behaviours are observed from an individual or a group, the biopsy activities will be discontinued on that individual or group. The animals to be sampled will either approach the vessel on their own or be approached by the main research vessel during normal survey operations. The projectile biopsy sample will be collected from animals within approximately 5 to 30 m of the bow of the vessel.

For large cetaceans, small samples (<1 gram) will be obtained from free-ranging individuals using a biopsy dart with a stainless steel tip measuring approximately 4 cm in length with an external diameter of 9 mm and is fitted with a 2.5 cm stop to ensure recoil and prevent deeper penetration (so that only 1.5 cm of the tip is available to penetrate the animal). Between sample periods, the biopsy tips are thoroughly cleaned and sterilized with bleach. Biological samples may be collected from adults, juveniles, females with calves and calves. The same size biopsy dart would be used for calves as for adults. No biological samples will be taken from newborn calves. The age of a calf would be determined by the subjective

judgment of our field biologists who have up to 20+ years experience in the field. They would, and would be instructed to, be on the side of caution and not biopsy an animal that appeared too young.

#### *Photo-id*

As appropriate and decided by the Cruise Leader, research time will be given for photo-identification and/or video taping of right, blue, humpback whales in this cruise. Killer whale is "non-target" cetacean which lower priority on the opportunistic basis. As noted above, the estimated daily number of miles to be steamed in searching mode has a built in allowance for such work. Photographs will be available under the standard IWC Guidelines. Generally, large whales will be approached within approximately 15-20 meters. Photo-identification of adult and juvenile males and females will occur. If the opportunity arises, females accompanied by calves may be approached for photo-identification, but efforts will cease immediately if there is any evidence that the activity may be interfering with pair bonding, nursing, reproduction, feeding or other vital functions.

#### *Acoustic studies*

This will depend on whether it is practical to use a towed array for sperm whales and whether it is possible to obtain suitable sonobuoys for blue whales.

#### *Oceanographic studies*

No specific oceanographic studies are planned for 2012.

#### *Identification of home port organiser*

It will be the responsibility of the Japanese scientists (TBD) to organise matters in the home port Shioyama.

#### *Necessary permits*

The Gulf of Alaska occurs in the planned research area including US and Canadian EEZs. It should be noted that at least three different kinds of permit or permission would be needed to work in US waters. Research permits (a US MMPA and ESA) are needed for any surveys for cetaceans. Such permits are granted by the US National Marine Fisheries Service.

A second kind of permission needed would be from the US government (State Department) for entry of a foreign vessel into US waters to carry out research.

Permit from the US Government for research within the EEZ of those islands should be obtained in advance of the cruise (line transect, biopsy and photo-ID experiments). It is noted that should biopsy samples be obtained within US waters, a special CITES permit would need to be obtained; samples obtained outside US waters would need an 'introduction from the sea' CITES permit. CITES permits will also be required to ship the IWC half of the biopsy samples to the SWFSC in La Jolla, as is the case for the SOWER samples.

#### *Data holders and transportation of equipment*

The rules for data availability, shipping and storage will be as for the previous IWC/SOWER cruises and the 2011 survey cruise in the North Pacific. It is also noted that existing IWC equipment used in the 2011 cruise could be used on the 2012 cruise if required. All records will be discharged in Shioyama to and will be sent to the IWC Secretariat under the responsibility of the cruise leader.

All photo-ID digital photographs of this cruise are to be sent to IWC and copied to Japan as same as previous IWC/SOWER and the 2011 North Pacific survey cruises. Photographs are available under standard IWC guidelines. Copied data will be stored at the Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR).

Samples for molecular genetic analyses are to be divided in half, with one half of the sample for IWC (to be sent to the NOAA/NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC)) and the other half for Japan.

All samples will be frozen. In addition, when biopsy samples have a significant amount of blubber attached, the blubber is to be separated from the skin, wrapped in aluminium foil, and frozen. Details can be found in the "Information for researchers" (Anon., 2010).

All records taken from the US EEZ made available for unrestricted scientific research will also be copied and discharged in Shioyama, and will be sent to the SWFSC. This includes photographs and one-thirds of the sample from each biopsy sample collected in the US EEZ if any.

### *Meetings*

Arrangements for the holding of pre- and post cruise meetings with crew and researchers will be the responsibility of the cruise leader and Japanese scientists.

### *Reports*

The cruise will follow the requirements for reports and documentation developed for cruises that could provide data for use under the RMP. This will be the responsibility of the cruise leader.

A draft of the cruise report will be prepared, in accordance with the guidelines documented in IWC (1994), prior to arrival in the home port and, as necessary, the draft will be reviewed during the post-cruise meeting. The Cruise Leader will email the final report to the IWC Secretariat as soon as possible. It will also be made available on the IWC website.

Copies of the final report will be forwarded by the IWC Secretariat to all Steering Group members, all researchers, the captain, the US Government (through Brownell), Korean Government (through An), Canadian Government and the Fisheries Agency of Japan (cruise leader).

## **REVIEW OF THE BUDGET**

The plans given above assume the same level of Japanese funding being available as for the 2011 North Pacific sighting survey cruise. Direct funds would be requested for 2012 to the IWC budget (IWC, 2010a).

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### Appendix 1. Distribution of previous catches of large whale species in the North Pacific.

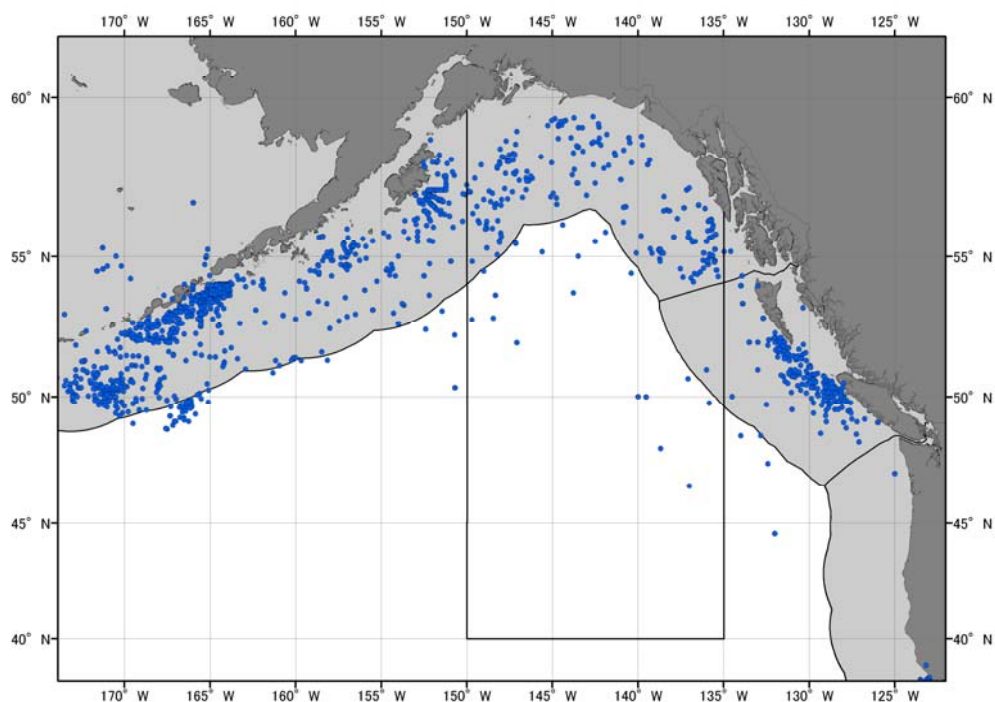


Figure 1. Catch distribution of blue whales in the North Pacific. Catch data are from the IWC database (ver. 4.0). Outer limit of foreign EEZ is provided by NOAA Office of Coast Survey and the data are available from [http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/csdl/docs/GIS\\_EEZ\\_Alaska.zip](http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/csdl/docs/GIS_EEZ_Alaska.zip).

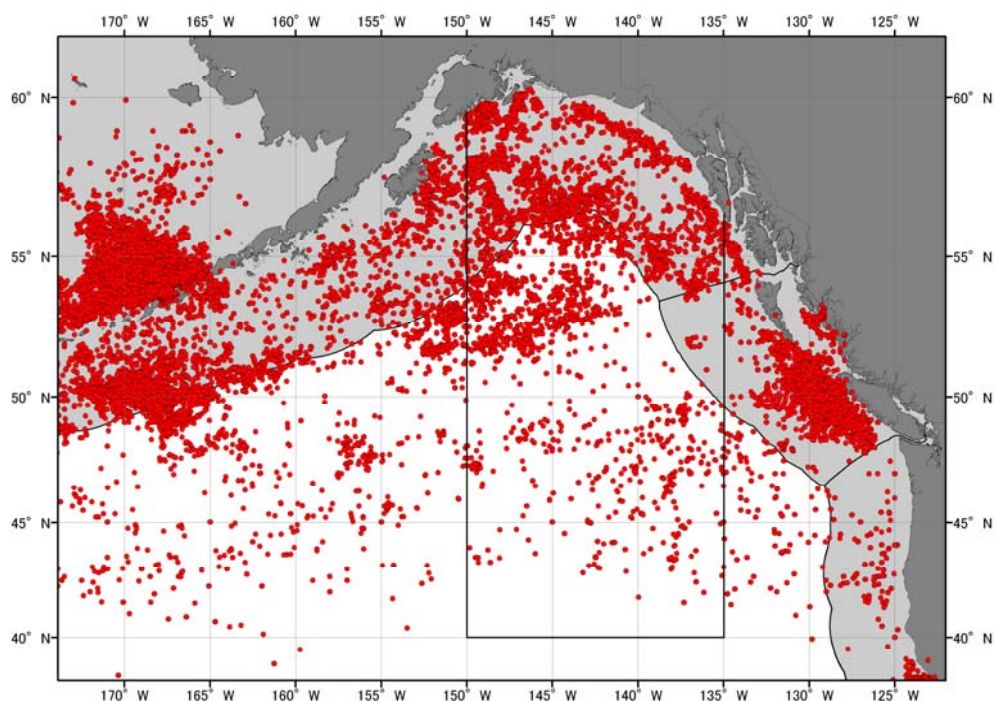


Figure 2. Catch distribution of fin whales in the North Pacific. Catch data are from the IWC database (ver. 4.0). Outer limit of foreign EEZ is provided by NOAA Office of Coast Survey and the data are available from [http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/csdl/docs/GIS\\_EEZ\\_Alaska.zip](http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/csdl/docs/GIS_EEZ_Alaska.zip).

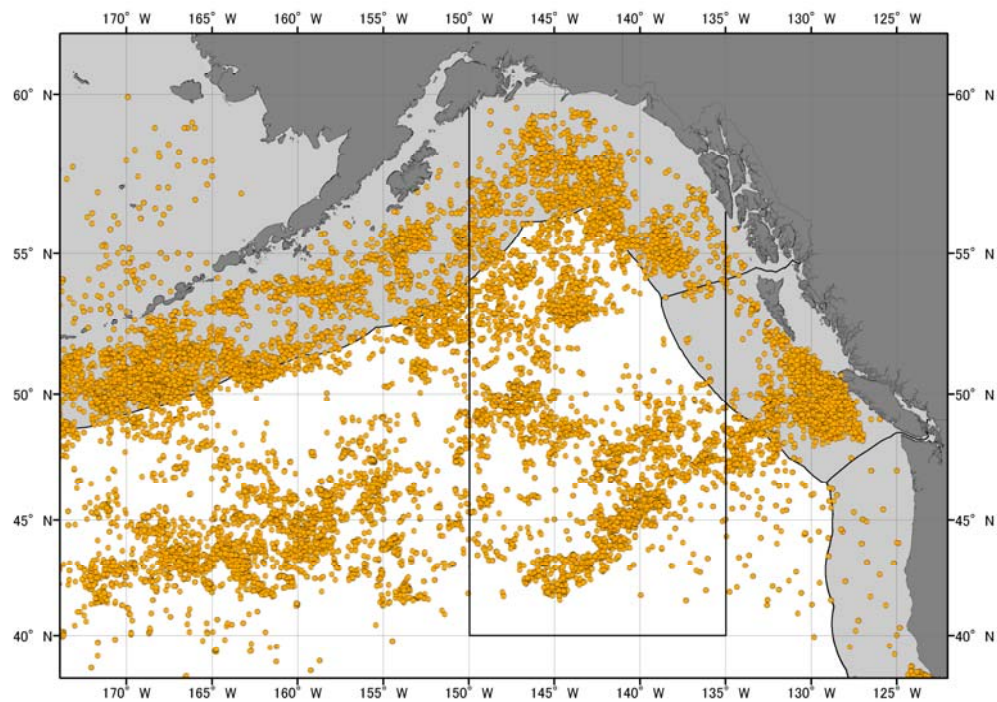


Figure 3. Catch distribution of sei whales in the North Pacific. Catch data are from the IWC database (ver. 4.0). Outer limit of foreign EEZ is provided by NOAA Office of Coast Survey and the data are available from [http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/csdl/docs/GIS\\_EEZ\\_Alaska.zip](http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/csdl/docs/GIS_EEZ_Alaska.zip).

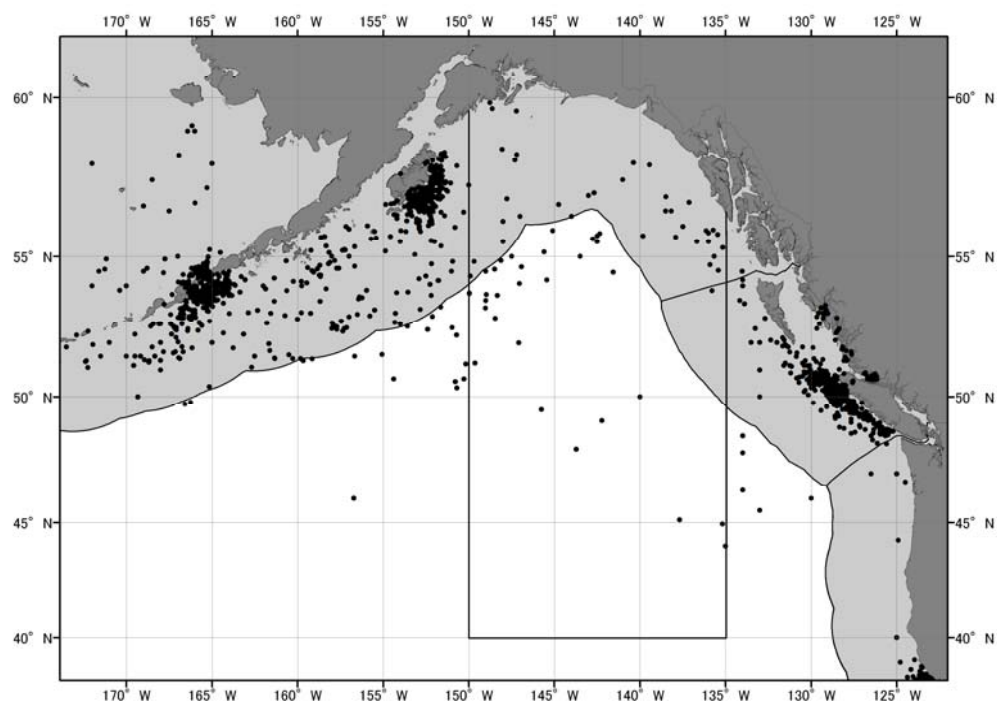


Figure 4. Catch distribution of humpback whales in the North Pacific. Catch data are from the IWC database (ver. 4.0). Outer limit of foreign EEZ is provided by NOAA Office of Coast Survey and the data are available from [http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/csdl/docs/GIS\\_EEZ\\_Alaska.zip](http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/csdl/docs/GIS_EEZ_Alaska.zip).

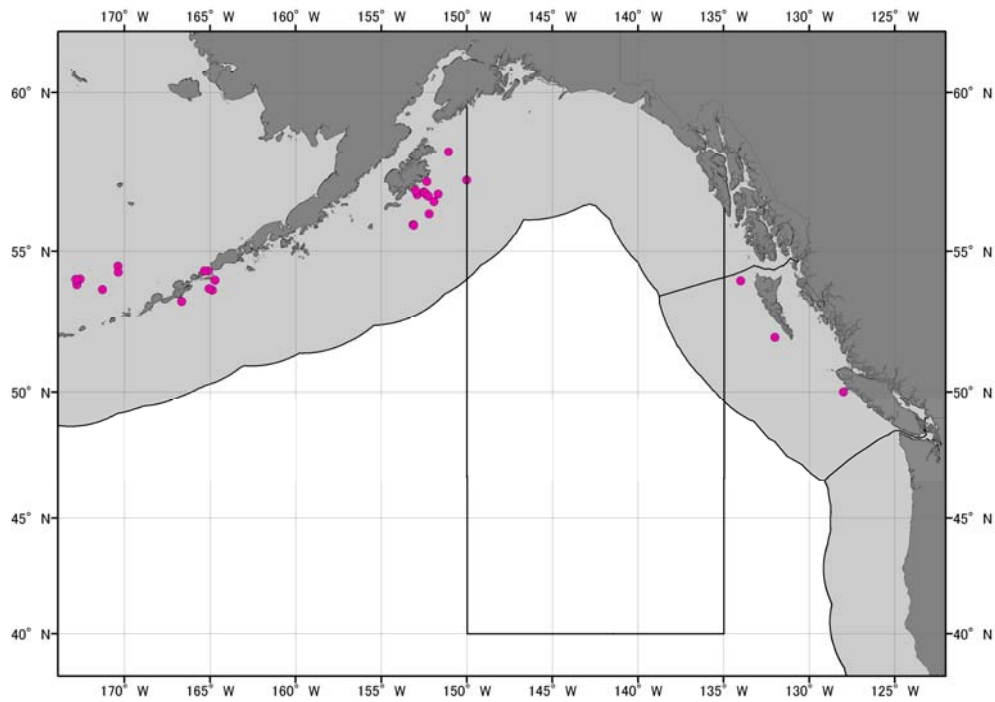


Figure 5. Catch distribution of right whales in the North Pacific. Catch data are from the IWC database (ver. 4.0). Outer limit of foreign EEZ is provided by NOAA Office of Coast Survey and the data are available from [http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/csdl/docs/GIS\\_EEZ\\_Alaska.zip](http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/csdl/docs/GIS_EEZ_Alaska.zip).

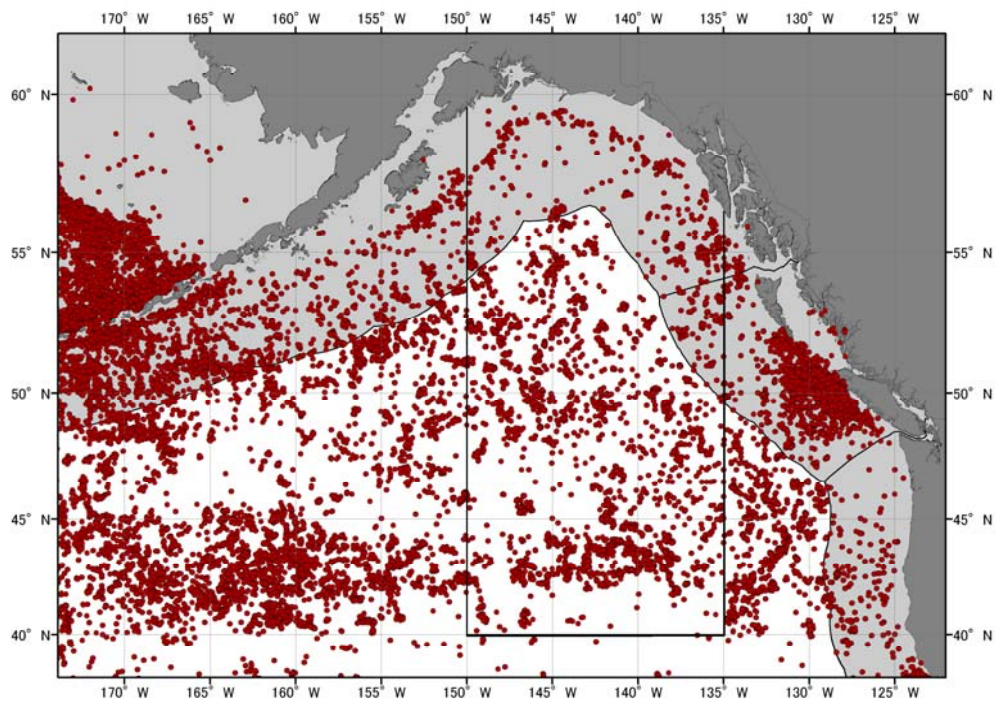


Figure 6. Catch distribution of sperm whales in the North Pacific. Catch data are from the IWC database (ver. 4.0). Outer limit of foreign EEZ is provided by NOAA Office of Coast Survey and the data are available from [http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/csdl/docs/GIS\\_EEZ\\_Alaska.zip](http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/csdl/docs/GIS_EEZ_Alaska.zip).