

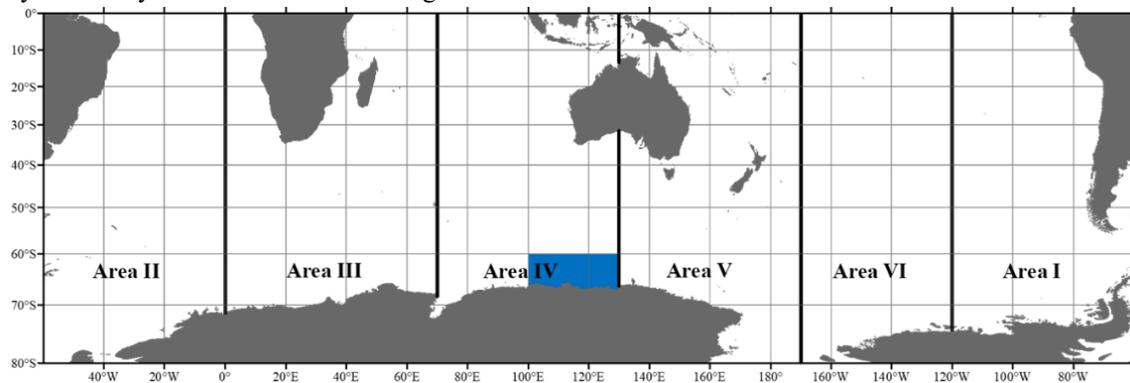
Japan's Scientific Progress Report on Large Cetaceans in the fiscal year 2024 (April 2024 to March 2025), with statistical data for the calendar year 2024

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This document summarizes the data and samples of large cetaceans, which were collected by the Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR), Fisheries Resources Institute (FRI) and Fisheries Agency of Japan (FAJ) in the fiscal year 2024 (April 2024 to March 2025), and statistical data for the calendar year 2024. In addition, information on major international meetings and a list of publications through December 2025 are also included. Sighting data for abundance estimates of large cetaceans were collected in the North Pacific, Sea of Okhotsk, Sea of Japan and the Antarctic during systematic sighting surveys. During the surveys, photo-ID, biopsy and satellite tracking experiments on large cetaceans were also conducted. A large number of biological data and samples were collected during the surveys for whales taken under the commercial whaling within the Japanese Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the western North Pacific. Species and figures of bycatch and stranding of large cetaceans are based on the reports of prefecture governments to the FAJ, which compile information from individual fishermen, fishermen cooperatives and general public. Data and samples collected are being analyzed to contribute mainly to stock assessment in the context of conservation and management of large cetaceans in the North Pacific and the Antarctic.

1. SIGHTING DATA

Dedicated sighting survey under the program Japanese Abundance and Stock structure Surveys in the Antarctic (JASS-A) in the Southern Ocean in the austral summer season 2024/25 (vessel: *Yushin-Maru No.2*, *Yushin-Maru No.3*). The area covered by the survey is shown in blue in the figure below.

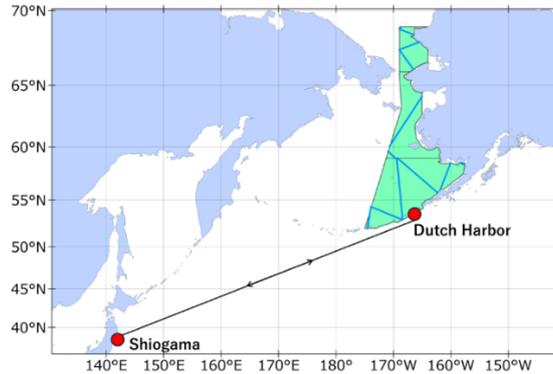


Species	Date (research period)	Local area	No. of schools/No. of individuals	Contact person
Antarctic Blue whale	YS2 (2 Jan. – 9 Feb./25) YS3 (3 Jan. – 9 Feb./25)	Area IVE + Transit (From equator to R.A.)	20/26	G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp
Fin whale		Area IVE + Transit (From equator to R.A.)	30/74	
Sei whale		Area IVE	2/3	
Antarctic minke whale		Area IVE	148/332	
Dwarf minke whale		Area IVE	5/5	
Humpback whale		Area IVE + Transit (From equator to R.A.)	861/1527	
Southern right whale		Area IVE	3/3	
Sperm whale		Area IVE + Transit (From equator to R.A.)	6/7	
		Transit (Western North Pacific)	1/1	
Southern bottlenose whale		Area IVE	12/22	

Cruise report of the JASS-A in 2024/25 austral summer season is available at:

<https://www.icrwhale.org/pdf/TEREP00924-33.pdf>

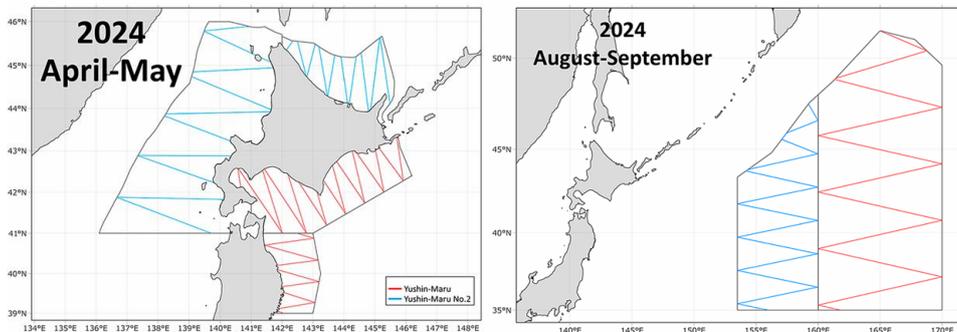
Dedicated sighting survey under the program International Whaling Commission-Pacific Ocean Whale and Ecosystem Research (IWC-POWER) in the North Pacific in 2024 (vessel: *Yushin-Maru No.2*). The area covered by the survey is shown in green in the figure below.



Species	Date (research period)	Local area	No. of schools/No. of individuals	Contact person
Fin whale	17 Aug. – 22 Aug./24 24 Aug. – 30 Aug./24 1 Sep. – 24 Sep./24	Chukchi Sea + Bering Sea+ Transit	85/156	G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp
Sei whale		Transit	12/14	
Common minke whale		Bering Sea	5/6	
Humpback whale		Chukchi Sea + Bering Sea+ Transit	23/42	
Gray whale		Chukchi Sea + Bering Sea+ Transit	57/121	
Bowhead whale		Chukchi Sea	1/2	
Sperm whale		Bering Sea+ Transit	6/6	

Cruise report of the 2024 IWC-POWER is available at:
https://iwc.int/public/documents/yPJR6/Final_2024_POWER_Cruise_Report.pdf

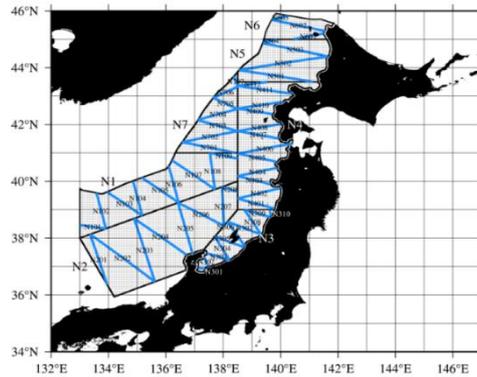
Dedicated sighting surveys under national program in the North Pacific in 2024 (vessels: *Yushin-Maru (YS1)*, *Yushin-Maru No.2 (YS2)* and *Kaiyo-Maru No.7 (KY7)*). Left: spring survey. *YS1* surveyed the track-line in blue, and *YS2* covered the track-line in red. Right: summer survey. *YS1* covered the track-line in the red. *KY7* surveyed the track-line in blue.



Species	Date (research period)	Local area	No. of schools/No. of individuals	Contact person
Fin whale	YS1 (24 Apr. – 31 May/24) YS2 (15 Apr. – 25 May/24)	Western North Pacific Sea of Okhotsk Sea of Japan	33/53	G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp
Common minke whale			35/41	
Bryde's whale			8/9	
Humpback whale			43/60	
Sperm whale			16/47	

Species	Date (research period)	Local area	No. of schools/No. of individuals	Contact person
Blue whale	KY7 (6 Aug. – 4 Sep., 10 Sep. – 4 Oct./24) YS1 (8 Aug. – 25 Sep./24)	Western North Pacific	23/25	G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp
Fin whale			39/49	
Sei whale			82/98	
Common minke whale			6/6	
Bryde's whale			56/76	
Humpback whale			6/7	
Sperm whale			114/243	

Large whale species sighted during dedicated sighting survey focused on small cetacean in the Sea of Japan in 2024 (vessel: *Kaiyo-Maru No.7*).



Species	Date (research period)	Local area	No. of schools/No. of individuals	Contact person
Fin whale	31 May – 25 Jun./24	Sea of Japan	4/5	K. Hattori (FRI)
Common minke whale	27 Jun. – 23 Sep./24		4/4	hattori_kaoru68@fra.go.jp

2. MARKING DATA

2.1. Natural marking data (photo-id)

JASS-A survey-Antarctic in 2024/25

Species	Feature	Local area	No. of individuals photo identified	Contact person
Antarctic blue whale	Head, Dorsal fin, Lateral marking	Area IVE	24	G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp
Dwarf minke whale	Lateral marking		1	
Humpback whale	Fluke		36	
Southern right whale	Head, fluke		3	

IWC-POWER survey-North Pacific in 2024

Species	Feature	Local area	No. of individuals photo identified	Contact person
Fin whale	Dorsal fin	Chukchi Sea Bering Sea	34	G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp
Humpback whale	Fluke, Dorsal fin		14	
Gray whale	Lateral marking		5	
Bowhead whale	Lateral marking		1	

National dedicated sighting surveys-North Pacific in 2024 (spring)

Species	Feature	Local area	No. of individuals photo identified	Contact person
Humpback whale	Head, Dorsal fin, Fluke	Western North Pacific Sea of Okhotsk Sea of Japan	5	G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp

National dedicated sighting surveys-North Pacific in 2024 (summer)

Species	Feature	Local area	No. of individuals photo identified	Contact person
Blue whale	Dorsal fin, Lateral marking	Western North Pacific	1	G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp
Humpback whale	Fluke		1	

Coastal vessel-based photo-ID survey around Hachijo Island in 2025

Species	Feature	Local area	No. of individuals photo identified	Contact person
Humpback whale	Head, Dorsal fin, Fluke	Hachijo Island Coastal Area	89	G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp

2.2. Telemetry data

JASS-A survey-Antarctic in 2024/25

Species	Tag type	Local area	No. of individuals tagged	Contact person
Fin whale	Satellite (SPOT)	Area IVE + Transit	9	G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp
	Satellite (SPLASH)		2	
Antarctic minke whale	Satellite (SPOT)	Area IVE	20	
	Satellite (SPLASH)		5	
Humpback whale	Satellite (SPLASH)		2	

National dedicated sighting surveys-North Pacific in 2024 (spring)

Species	Tag type	Local area	No. of individuals tagged	Contact person
Common minke whale	Satellite (SPOT)	Western North Pacific Sea of Okhotsk Sea of Japan	13	G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp

National dedicated sighting surveys-North Pacific in 2024 (summer)

Species	Tag type	Local area	No. of individuals tagged	Contact person
Fin whale	Satellite (SPOT)	Western North Pacific	4	G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp
	Satellite (MINTAG)		1	

3. BIOPSY SAMPLES

JASS-A survey-Antarctic in 2024/25

Species	Local area	No. of samples	Contact person
Antarctic blue whale	Area IVE	12	G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp
Fin whale		18	
Antarctic minke whale		35	
Dwarf minke whale		1	
Humpback whale		52	
Southern right whale		3	

IWC-POWER survey-North Pacific in 2024

Species	Local area	No. of samples	Contact person
Fin whale	Chukchi Sea Bering Sea	7	G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp
Sei whale		2	
Humpback whale		8	
Gray whale		3	

National dedicated sighting surveys-North Pacific in 2024 (spring)

Species	Local area	No. of samples	Contact person
Fin whale	Western North Pacific Sea of Okhotsk Sea of Japan	5	G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp
Common minke whale		10	

National dedicated sighting surveys-North Pacific in 2024 (summer)

Species	Local area	No. of samples	Contact person
Fin whale	Western North Pacific	5	G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp

Dedicated sighting survey on small cetacean in the Sea of Japan in 2024

Species	Local area	No. of samples	Contact person
Fin whale	Sea of Japan	1	G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp

4. DIRECT CATCHES OF CETACEANS

4.1. Biological samples from commercial whaling

Offshore component (2024)

Samples and data	Area	Species and No. of individuals			Contact person/institute
		Bryde's whale	Sei whale	Fin whale	
Body length and sex	Western North Pacific	175	25	30	FAJ G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp
Photographic record and external character		175	25	30	
Measurement of girth		175	25	30	
Measurements of blubber thickness (two points)		175	25	30	
Body weight		175	25	26	
Earplug for age determination		175	25	30	
Eye lens for age determination		175	24	30	
Mammary gland; lactation status and measurement		100	17	21	
Collection of ovary		100	17	21	
Photographic record of foetus		46*	3	1	
Foetal sex (identified by visual observation)		46*	3	1	
Foetal length and weight		46*	3	1	
Foetal skin tissues for DNA analysis		46*	3	1	
Eye lens of foetus for age determination		0	0	1	
Testis; weight, histological sample		75	8	9	
Collection of blood plasma		171	24	30	
Skin tissues for DNA analysis		175	25	30	
Muscle, liver and blubber for various analysis		175	25	30	
Observation of stomach contents and conventional record		175	25	30	
Observation of marine debris in stomach		175	25	30	
Record of external parasites	175	25	30		

* One out of 46 is unknown-sex fetuses.

Coastal component (2024)

Samples and data	Area	Species and No. of individuals		Contact person/institute
		Common minke whale	Bryde's whale	
Body length and sex	Off Japanese coast	87	4	FAJ K. Hattori (FRI) hattori_kaoru68@fra.go.jp G. Yasunaga (ICR) yasunaga@cetacean.jp
Photographic record and external character		87	4	
Body scar record		87	4	
Measurements of blubber thickness (two points)		87	4	
Skin tissues for DNA analysis		87	4	
Muscle, liver and blubber for various analysis		87	4	
Mammary gland; lactation status and measurement		49	4	
Uterine horn; measurements and endometrium sample		49	4	
Collection of ovary		49	4	
Foetal sex (identified by visual observation)		34	1	
Photographic record of foetus		34	1	
Foetal length and weight		34	1	
Foetal skin tissues for DNA analysis		34	1	
Eye lens of foetus for age determination		34	1	
Testis; weight and histological sample		38	0	
Stomach contents and conventional record		87	4	
Earplug for age determination		85	4	
Eye lens for age determination		87	4	
Baleen plate for age determination (body length ≤ 6 m)		14	4	

5. FISHERIES BYCATCHES OF CETACEANS

Species	No. of animals	Location ¹⁾	Fate ²⁾	Gear ³⁾	Target fish species ⁴⁾	Source or contact
Common minke whale	7	Hokkaido	K	FPN	NA	FAJ
	4	Aomori	K	FPN		
	10	Iwate	K	FPN		
	7	Miyagi	K	FPN		
	1	Chiba	K	FPN		
	1	Kanagawa	K	FPN		
	1	Niigata	K	FPN		
	1	Niigata	R	FPN		
	8	Toyama	K	FPN		
	6	Ishikawa	K	FPN		
	1	Fukui	K	FPN		
	1	Shizuoka	K	FPN		
	3	Mie	K	FPN		
	2	Wakayama	K	FPN		
	3	Shimane	K	FPN		
	4	Yamaguchi	K	FPN		
	2	Kochi	K	FPN		
	11	Nagasaki	K	FPN		
5	Miyazaki	K	FPN			
2	Kagoshima	K	FPN			
Fin whale	2	Iwate	K	FPN	NA	FAJ
	1	Miyagi	D	FPN		
	1	Shimane	D	FPN		
Bryde's whale	1	Iwate	K	FPN		
Humpback whale	1	Chiba	D	FPN		
	1	Wakayama	R	FPN		
	1	Nagasaki	D	FPN		
	5	Okinawa	R	FPN		
Unidentified large whale	1	Kanagawa	R	FPN		
	1	Tottori	R	FPN		

1) Recorded at the place of fishing gears; 2) Fate of whale: D = discarded dead or seriously injured, K = kept for sale or specimen, R = released alive; 3) Described using 'FAO Fishing Description and Codes', that is, stationary uncovered pound nets (FPN), set gillnets (GNS) and miscellaneous gear (MIS); 4) Target fish species: NA = not available.

6. STRANDING OF CETACEANS

Species	No. strandings	Prefecture	Source or contact
Common minke whale	6	Hokkaido	FAJ
	3	Aomori	
	1	Kanagawa	
	1	Wakayama	
	2	Kagoshima	
Fin whale	1	Hokkaido	
	1	Fukui	
	1	Hyogo	
	1	Tottori	
	1	Shimane	
Humpback whale	1	Hokkaido	
	2	Chiba	
	1	Kochi	
	1	Okinawa	
Sperm whale	3	Hokkaido	
	1	Iwate	
	2	Fukushima	
	1	Ibaraki	
	1	Chiba	
	1	Mie	
	1	Osaka	
1	Kagoshima		
Unidentified large whale	1	Tottori	

7. INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS (2025)

Mid-term international review workshop of the Japanese Abundance and Stock structure Surveys (JASS-A)

The mid-term international review (MTR) workshop of JASS-A, chaired by Pastene of ICR, was carried out successfully in Tokyo between 20 and 22 October 2025. A total of 28 scientific documents derived from the JASS-A program was discussed between Japanese scientists and invited participants from Norway, United Kingdom, Germany and South Africa. A total of 24 scientists, two government officials (FAJ) and two interpreters participated in the workshop.

Technical Adviser Group (TAG) Meeting and 2026 cruise planning meeting of the IWC-POWER program

The 2025 TAG meeting and the 2026-2027 cruise planning meeting were held from 7 to 9 December 2025 at the International Cetacean Center, Taiji, Wakayama, Japan. The Technical Adviser Group (TAG) meeting was co-chaired by Kitakado of the TUMSAT and Matsuoka of ICR. Matsuoka also chaired the planning meeting.

8. PUBLICATIONS (2024–2025)

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- Førland, B. Skaug, H.J., Takahashi, M. and Pastene, L.A. 2025. Close-Kin Mark-Recapture Without Age Information: Application to Southern Right Whales. *Journal of Agricultural, Biological, and Environmental Statistics*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13253-025-00689-3>.
- Goto, M., Tamura, T., Bando, T. and Yasunaga, G. 2024. Genetically identified J-stock common minke whales: an overview of their biological and ecological features in waters around Japan. *Cetacean Population Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.34331/cpops.2022-Re-001>.
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- Konishi, K., Minamikawa, M., Kleivane, L. and Takahashi, M. 2024. Annual phenology and migration routes to breeding grounds in western-central North Pacific sei whales. *Scientific Reports*. 14:11212. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-61831-8>.
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- Olson, P.A., Kinzey, D., Double, M.C., Matsuoka, K. and Findlay, K. 2024. Capture–recapture estimates of Antarctic blue whale abundance and population growth rate. *Marine Mammal Science*, e13215. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mms.132150>.
- Pastene, L.A. 2024. A review of biopsy sampling experiments and studies of stock structure, phylogeny and taxonomy of large whales based on samples obtained on SOWER cruises. *J. Cetacean Res. Manage.* (special issue) 4: 43–62.
- Sekine, A., Yasunaga, G., Kumamoto, S., Fujibayashi, S., Munirah, I., Bai, L., Tani, T., Sugano, E., Tomita, H., Ozaki, T., Kiyono, T., Inoue-Murayama, M. and Fukuda, T. 2024. Characterization of common minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) cell lines immortalized with the expression of cell cycle regulators. *Advanced Biology* 8(3): e2300227. [doi:10.1002/adbi.202300227](https://doi.org/10.1002/adbi.202300227).
- Shabangu, F.W., Stafford, K.M., Findlay, K.P., Rankin, S., Ljungblad, D., Tsuda, Y., Morse, L., Clark, C.W., Kato, H., Ensor, P. 2024. Overview of the SOWER cruise circumpolar acoustic survey data and analyses of Antarctic blue whale calls. A special issue focusing on the analysis of data gathered during the IWC SOWER cruises which ran from

1978/79 to 2008/09. *J. Cetacean Res. Manage.* (special issue) 4: 21-41.

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