

# Oversight report for the 2012/13 cetacean sighting survey in the Antarctic

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## ABSTRACT

The plan for the dedicated sighting survey for abundance estimations in the Antarctic in the 2012/13 austral summer season was endorsed by the International Whaling Commission Scientific Committee (IWC SC) during its 2012 meeting. The research vessels *Yushin-Maru No 2* and *Yushin-Maru No 3* were planned to operate the survey in the Area III east, Area IV and western part of Area V. The planned survey method was the same as in the IWC-SOWER (Southern Ocean Whale and Ecosystem Research). The design of the track lines was improved to cover each research area with uniform probability. Furthermore the planned sighting procedure was in accordance with the guideline agreed by the SC (IWC, 2005). It is very unfortunate to inform that the research activity could not be conducted at all due to external violent interferences by an anti-whaling group. This group has directed violent sabotage activities against Japanese research vessels in previous seasons. It actually continued such activities throughout 2012/13 season again. In order to secure safety of the research vessels and their crew members, the sighting vessels had to dedicate most of its planned research time to security tasks. It is very regrettable and disappointing to report that this large investment - dedicated sighting survey in the Antarctic had to be completely cancelled in the 2012/13 season. This is a great loss for the Antarctic whale research and management under the IWC SC work.

## INTRODUCTION

During its 2012 annual meeting the IWC SC endorsed a sighting survey plan to be carried out in the Antarctic in the 2012/13 austral summer season, as a component of the JARPAII (IWC, 2012). It named K. Matsuoka as the oversight person for the survey on behalf of the IWC SC. The original plan for the sighting survey was presented by Matsuoka *et al.* (2012).

This paper contains a brief report of the oversight activities. Results of the JARPAII survey in 2012/13 are given in Tamura *et al.* (2013).

## PLANNING OF THE SURVEY

The plan for the sighting survey was presented to the 2012 IWC SC meeting (Matsuoka *et al.*, 2012), and it was endorsed by the IWC SC (IWC, 2012). In endorsing the plan the IWC SC noted that 'the cruise track design was now more closely akin to that used in the IWC-SOWER (Southern Ocean Whale and Ecosystem Research) surveys than previously. It represents a large investment in terms of time, personnel and cost, and the data from the survey contribute to the work of the SC, particularly in assessing the status of Antarctic minke whales in this important area, but also for providing a source of information on other baleen whales'.

The research vessels *Yushin-Maru No.2* and *Yushin-Maru No.3* were planned to operate the survey in the Area III east, Area IV and western part of Area V, south of 60°S mainly during January to February. All equipments and the survey method were the same as in the IWC-SOWER surveys. A small group was established for the survey design, which took into account of consistency of the previous JARPAII and IWC/SOWER surveys and analyses based on the IWC survey guideline (IWC, 2005, 2010).

## OVERSIGHT OF THE SURVEY

The research vessels departed Japan as planned. The research activities were first interrupted in the beginning of the transit survey to the research area by an anti-whaling group which has directed violent sabotage activities against Japanese research vessels in previous seasons. It actually continued such activities throughout 2012/13 season again. In order to secure safety of the research vessels and their crew members, the planned sighting vessels had to dedicate many of its planned research time to security task. It is very regrettable and disappointing to report that this large investment - dedicated sighting survey in the Antarctic- had to be completely cancelled in the 2012/13 season. This is a great loss for the Antarctic whale research and management under the IWC/SC works.

## REFERENCE

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