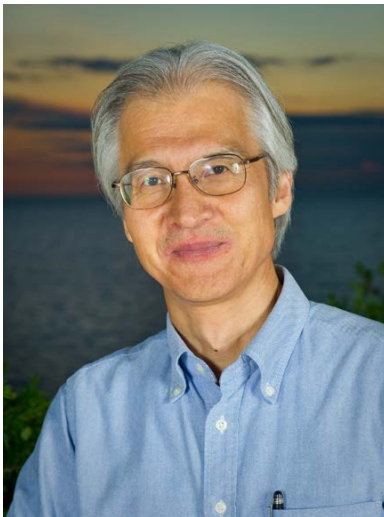




January 2017

## Introduction



This is the first News Bulletin under my Chairmanship and I want to begin by thanking our outgoing Chair, Bruno Mainini of Switzerland.

I'm sure you agree that, over the last two years, Bruno has overseen progress in many areas, and his approach contributed greatly to a constructive and good humoured meeting in Portoroz last October. I would like to develop this positive working environment over the intersessional period and on to the next Commission meeting. I may also spend a little time building a more competitive selection of whale print ties!

I'd also like to highlight the valuable contribution made by the Bureau. Since its formation, this group has operated on principles of openness, candour and mutual respect, and I value its support in navigating through the next intersessional period.

IWC66 established another very full and diverse work programme, but the IWC community seems to relish such challenges. I am confident we can deliver and I thank you all for your time, expertise and commitment.

Joji Morishita

IWC Chair

### Upcoming Events

#### **30 Jan-3 Feb, Tokyo**

Workshop: review of new proposal for special permit whaling in the North Pacific

#### **21-24 Mar, Tokyo**

Workshop: Revised Management Procedure *Implementation Review* for Bryde's whales

#### **18-21 Apr, Seattle**

Workshop: Comprehensive Assessment of North Pacific humpback whales

#### **27-29 Apr, La Jolla**

Workshop: fourth of the gray whale range-wide review

#### **9-21 May, Bled**

Annual meeting of the IWC Scientific Committee

## News & Updates

### Developing a small cetacean toolkit

In November, representatives from twelve countries were invited to a new kind of workshop in Thailand. Small cetacean catches are poorly documented and the aim was to develop a toolkit of techniques that could be used by local groups to improve understanding of the use of cetaceans for food, bait, barter or trade.

The toolkit aims to equip participants with a range of skills including forensic techniques, such as DNA testing that might be

used to identify marine mammal meat, and zoonotic sampling techniques to test for disease.

It's hoped that these skills can be taken away and adopted in locations across Asia, with local groups equipped and motivated to work with international researchers to build a clearer picture of these catches, and any potential threats to individual cetacean populations. The event was the first of its kind. It attracted some 200 attendees and was supported by the Department of Natural Resources and the Thai Royal Navy. Further workshops are now being planned in South America and Africa.



### Entanglement response training in Thailand

The IWC's Entanglement Response programme was also involved in November's work in Southeast Asia, with training organised for those gathered in Thailand. Using guidelines established by a group of international entanglement response experts, the training began in the classroom with background information and theory before moving onto the water for demonstrations and practice with the customised disentanglement kit.

The Entanglement Response programme was launched in 2012 and has now raised awareness and delivered training in safe and effective entanglement response techniques to nearly one thousand participants from around forty countries.



[find out more](#)

### Practical collaboration at the trilateral entanglement workshop

Entanglement response took another step forward in November, with a meeting of entanglement response leaders from Canada, the USA and Mexico. The aim was to develop working agreements to aid cooperation when dealing with entangled whales across national boundaries.

Held in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, the workshop was convened by the IWC Entanglement Response Network and hosted by la Comision Nacional de Areas Naturales Protegidas.

As the workshop reached a successful conclusion, reports were received that an entangled whale had been spotted in nearby



waters. A number of the workshop's participants joined local response teams and, despite fading light, managed to find the whale and attach lines.

Two attempts were made to cut the key lines of the entanglement before fading light made further work too dangerous. The following morning, search boats were unable to locate the whale which may have travelled on down the coast, a poignant reinforcement of the need for international collaboration.

The whale was later located by Mexico's RABEN response team who were able to remove most of the entanglement. This encounter also began a fruitful and ongoing dialogue between Mexican, US and Canadian responders, on how to determine the origin of entanglements.

[find out more](#)



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### Workshop: North Atlantic common minke whale

In December, members of the Scientific Committee gathered in Copenhagen for two inter-related workshops.

The first focused on an *Implementation Review* of North Atlantic common minke whales. These regular reviews are an important aspect of the Revised Management Procedure, the mechanism to provide advice on safe removal limits, should the Commission ever decide to reinstate commercial whaling. Good progress was made that should enable the *Implementation Review* to be completed at this year's Scientific Committee meeting in May, with advice subsequently provided to the Commission.

[find out more](#)



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### Further progress on Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling

The second Copenhagen workshop also made good progress. A busy and complex agenda took forward several initiatives related to aboriginal subsistence whaling.

Aided by new abundance estimates from Greenland, scientists used computer modelling to continue the development and evaluation of *Strike Limit Algorithms (SLAs)* for the remaining Greenland hunts (for fin and common minke whales). *SLAs* are used to calculate safe catch limits for subsistence hunts and have already been developed for the Alaskan and Chukchi hunts for bowhead and gray whales, as well as the humpback and bowhead whales off Greenland.

The workshop also made progress on some generic aspects of subsistence whaling management. The main topics under discussion were interim allowances (to be used under limited circumstances when it has not proved possible to obtain a new abundance estimate within the required timeframe) and terms for carryover of a portion of the catch from one year to the next. These scenarios might occur for a variety of reasons, for example bad weather.



The work undertaken at both workshops will be progressed over the intersessional period, with updates and results reported to the Scientific Committee in May. Aboriginal catch limits are agreed every six years and the next renewal is in 2018. The work undertaken at the December workshops is part of a wide-ranging programme that will provide a sound and comprehensive scientific basis for the Commission's discussions in 2018.

[find out more](#)

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### **Review of Japan's NEWREP-NP (North Pacific)**

At the end of January, an expert panel will convene in Tokyo to review Japan's proposal for a new special permit research programme in the western North Pacific. The proposal was circulated last November and, in accordance with the Scientific Committee's agreed process, will be reviewed by a small, specialist panel of invited experts. Their discussions and conclusions will be published in a report, submitted to the Scientific Committee for wider debate at its meeting in May. The advice of the Scientific Committee will then be presented for consideration by the Commission when it meets next year.

[find out more](#)

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### **Implementation Review begins for North Pacific Bryde's whale**

Under the requirements and guidelines of the Scientific Committee's Revised Management Procedure (see above), regular reviews are required to ensure that the most up-to-date information is used. An *Implementation Review* usually encompasses the available information on all the populations of a single species within a specific region (usually an ocean basin).

This will be the first *Review* for North Pacific Bryde's whales since the original *Implementation* was conducted in 2007. The workshop will take place in March, in Tokyo.

[find out more](#)

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### **North Pacific humpbacks: Comprehensive Assessment**

The Scientific Committee will also begin a 'Comprehensive Assessment' of North Pacific humpback whales. The objective of these in-depth assessments is to provide a thorough understanding of the status of the population(s) in question, including present abundance, past and future trends, and possible conservation issues. This is the first time North Pacific humpback whales have been assessed in this way. The work was largely prompted by new, regional estimates of abundance based on analysis of data collected by the SPLASH Project (Structure of Populations, Levels of Abundance and Status of Humpbacks). The workshop will be held in Seattle in April, and will comprise a review of existing information, consideration of initial population modelling results, and development of a workplan to complete the assessment.

### **North Pacific gray whales: fourth workshop in April**

The fourth workshop on the Rangewide Review of North Pacific gray whales will take place in La Jolla in April.

The work was instigated by the Scientific Committee in 2014, in part due to the results of a satellite tagging programme conducted under IWC auspices. This contradicted the long-held belief that there were two entirely separate populations of gray whales in the western and eastern North Pacific.

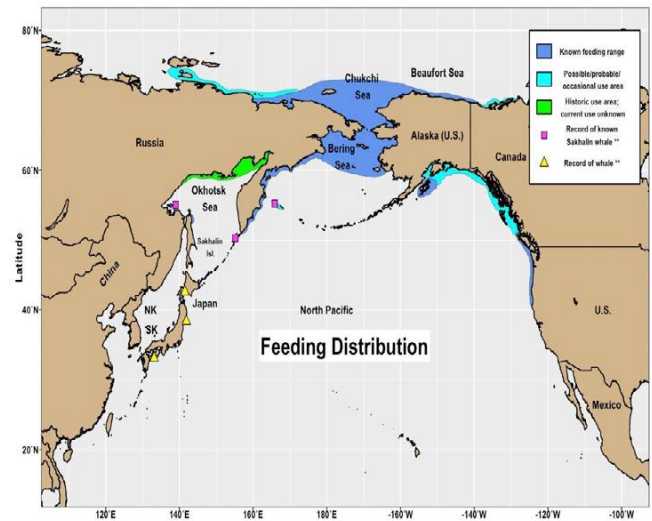
Tags showed that at least some whales who spent the summer months feeding off Sakhalin in the west, travelled across the

North Pacific, and down the North American coast to breeding and nursery grounds off Mexico in the eastern North Pacific.

The review is particularly significant because the animals feeding off Sakhalin Island, Russia, are classified as critically endangered, numbering around 175 animals. This population was the subject of the IWC's first Conservation Management Plan and a Memorandum of Cooperation signed by range states.

Work to better understand the North Pacific gray whale population structures and conservation status is highly technical. This workshop will compile and review the results of simulation trials. Subject to the results, this is likely to be the final workshop before conclusions are reached and the Scientific Committee submits advice to the Commission.

[find out more](#)



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