Japan's Scientific Progress Report on Large Cetaceans in the fiscal year 2025 (April 2025 to March 2026), with statistical data for the calendar year 2025

Government of Japan

ABSTRACT

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 2025 (April 2025 to March 2026), and statistical data for the calendar year 2024. Sighting data for abundance estimates of large cetaceans were collected in the western North Pacific, Sea of Okhotsk, Sea of Japan, Bering Sea, Chukchi Sea 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 Ocean. 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 for contributing to the management of large cetaceans in the North Pacific and the Antarctic.

1. SIGHTINGS DATA

	Large Area	Species	Year	Local Area	No. of Sightings
JASS-A Dedicated sighting vessel (including middle and low latitudinal sighting survey) (*Yushin-Maru No.2, Yushin-Maru No.3*) (2025/2026)	Southern Ocean	Blue whale	2025/2026	Area VW and VE	48
		Fin whale			457
		Sei whale			75
		Antarctic minke whale			100
		Dwarf minke whale			1
		Humpback whale			1,234
		Sperm whale			31
		Southern bottlenose whale			6
	Pacific Ocean - North	Fin whale		Western North Pacific	1
		Sei whale			26
		Bryde's whale			1
		Sperm whale			18
IWC-POWER Dedicated Sighting vessel (*Yushin-Maru No.2*) (2025)	Arctic Ocean Pacific Ocean - North	North Pacific right whale	2025	Chukchi Sea Bering Sea	1
		Gray whale			75
		Fin whale			127
		Sei whale			69
		Common minke whale			8
		Humpback whale			68
		Sperm whale			18
North Pacific Dedicated Sighting vessel survey in summer (*Yushin-Maru No.3, Kaiyo-Maru No.2*) (2025)	Pacific Ocean - North	Blue whale	2025	Western North Pacific	4
		Fin whale			39
		Sei whale			241
		Bryde's whale			54
		Sperm whale			230
North Pacific Dedicated Sighting vessel survey in spring (*Yushin-Maru, Yushin-Maru No.2*) (2025)	Pacific Ocean - North	Blue whale	2025	Western North Pacific Sea of Okhotsk Sea of Japan	8
		Fin whale			413
		Sei whale			65
		Bryde's whale			1
		Common minke whale			47
		Humpback whale			170
		Sperm whale			64
North Pacific Dedicated Sighting vessel survey in autumn (*Yushin-Maru No.2*) (2025)	Pacific Ocean - North	Blue whale	2025	Western North Pacific	2
		Fin whale			25
		Sei whale			67
		Bryde's whale			1
		Humpback whale			14
		Sperm whale			23
Dedicated Sighting vessel on small cetacean sighting survey (*Kaiyo-Maru No.2*) (2025)	Pacific Ocean - North	Fin whale	2025	Sea of Japan Western North Pacific	2
		Bryde's whale			17
		Common minke whale			5

2. MARKING DATA

2.1 Natural marking data

	Large Area	Species	Year	Local Area	Feature	No. of whales photo identified
JASS-A Dedicated sighting vessel (including middle and low latitudinal sighting survey) (*Yushin-Maru No.2* , *Yushin-Maru No.3*) (2025/2026)	Southern Ocean	Blue whale	2025/2026	Area VW and VE	Head, Dorsal fin, Lateral marking	35
		Humpback whale			Fluke	62
IWC-POWER Dedicated Sighting vessel (*Yushin-Maru No.2*) (2025)	Arctic Ocean Pacific Ocean - North	North Pacific right whale	2025	Chukchi Sea Bering Sea	Head	1
		Gray whale			Lateral marking	62
		Fin whale			Dorsal fin	46
		Sei whale			Dorsal fin	1
		Humpback whale			Fluke, Dorsal fin	23
North Pacific Dedicated Sighting vessel survey in summer (*Yushin-Maru No.3, Kaiyo-Maru No.2*) (2025)	Pacific Ocean - North	Blue whale	2025	Western North Pacific	Dorsal fin, Lateral marking	4
North Pacific Dedicated Sighting vessel survey in spring (*Yushin-Maru, Yushin-Maru No.2*) (2025)	Pacific Ocean - North	Blue whale	2025	Western North Pacific Sea of Okhotsk Sea of Japan	Dorsal fin, Lateral marking	6
		Humpback whale			Fluke	22
North Pacific Dedicated Sighting vessel survey in autumn (*Yushin-Maru No.2*) (2025)	Pacific Ocean - North	Blue whale	2025	Western North Pacific	Lateral marking	1
		Humpback whale			Fluke	1
Coastal Vessel-Based Photo-ID Survey around Hachijo Island (*Akimaru*)(2025/2026)	Pacific Ocean - North	Humpback whale	2025/2026	Hachijo Island Coastal Area	Fluke	96

2.2 Telemetry data

	Large Area	Species	Year	Local Area	Tag Type	No. of Deployments
JASS-A Dedicated sighting vessel (including middle and low latitudinal sighting survey) (*Yushin-Maru No.2* , *Yushin-Maru No.3*) (2025/2026)	Southern Ocean	Fin whale	2025/2026	Area VW and VE	Satellite	14
		Antarctic minke whale			Satellite	10
	Pacific Ocean - North	Sei whale		Western North Pacific	Satellite	8
North Pacific Dedicated Sighting vessel survey in summer (*Yushin-Maru No.3, Kaiyo-Maru No.2*) (2025)	Pacific Ocean - North	Fin whale	2025	Western North Pacific	Satellite	4
		Sei whale			Satellite	4
North Pacific Dedicated Sighting vessel survey in spring (*Yushin-Maru, Yushin-Maru No.2*) (2025)	Pacific Ocean - North	Fin whale	2025	Western North Pacific Sea of Okhotsk Sea of Japan	Satellite	86
		Sei whale			Satellite	8
		Common minke whale			Satellite	2
North Pacific Dedicated Sighting vessel survey in autumn (*Yushin-Maru No.2*) (2025)	Pacific Ocean - North	Fin whale	2025	Western North Pacific	Satellite	4
		Sei whale			Satellite	5
Coastal Vessel-Based Photo-ID Survey around Hachijo Island (*Akimaru*)(2025/2026)	Pacific Ocean - North	Humpback whale	2025/2026	Hachijo Island Coastal Area	Satellite	3

3. Biopsy samples

	Large Area	Species	Year	Local Area	Number Collected
JASS-A Dedicated sighting vessel (including middle and low latitudinal sighting survey) (*Yushin-Maru No.2* , *Yushin-Maru No.3*) (2025/2026)	Southern Ocean	Blue whale	2025/2026	Area VW and VE	18
		Fin whale			25
		Antarctic minke whale			12
		Humpback whale			29
	Pacific Ocean - North	Sei whale		Western North Pacific	8
IWC-POWER Dedicated Sighting vessel (*Yushin-Maru No.2*) (2025)	Arctic Ocean Pacific Ocean - North	North Pacific right whale	2025	Chukchi Sea Bering Sea	1
		Gray whale			32
		Fin whale			12
		Sei whale			5
		Humpback whale			12
North Pacific Dedicated Sighting vessel survey in summer (*Yushin-Maru No.3, Kaiyo-Maru No.2*) (2025)	Pacific Ocean - North	Fin whale	2025	Western North Pacific	6
		Sei whale			6
North Pacific Dedicated Sighting vessel survey in spring (*Yushin-Maru, Yushin-Maru No.2*) (2025)	Pacific Ocean - North	Blue whale	2025	Western North Pacific Sea of Okhotsk Sea of Japan	3
		Fin whale			122
		Sei whale			8
		Common minke whale			3
North Pacific Dedicated Sighting vessel survey in autumn *(Yushin-Maru No.2*) (2025)	Pacific Ocean - North	Fin whale	2025	Western North Pacific	3
		Sei whale			9

4. Direct catches of cetaceans

	Large Area	Species	Year	Local Area	Total Landed	No. of animals examined	No. of research items	Type of Catch
Factory ship type whaling (2025)	Pacific Ocean - North	Sei whale	2025	Western North Pacific	35	35	27	Commercial whaling
		Bryde's whale			143	143	27	
		Fin whale			60	60	27	
Coastal base type whaling (Ayukawa landstation) (2025)	Pacific Ocean - North	Common minke whale	2025	Off Japanese coast	11	11	25	Commercial whaling
Coastal base type whaling (Hachinohe landstation) (2025)	Pacific Ocean - North	Common minke whale	2025	Off Japanese coast	23	23	25	Commercial whaling
Coastal base type whaling (Abashiri landstation) (2025)	Pacific Ocean - North	Common minke whale	2025	Off Japanese coast	16	16	25	Commercial whaling
Coastal base type whaling (Kushiro landstation) (2025)	Pacific Ocean - North	Common minke whale	2025	Off Japanese coast	38	38	25	Commercial whaling

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	3	Hokkaido	K	FPN	NA	FAJ
	1	Aomori	K	FPN		
	7	Iwate	K	FPN		
	6	Miyagi	K	FPN		
	1	Chiba	K	FPN		
	1	Kanagawa	K	FPN		
	4	Niigata	K	FPN		
	9	Toyama	K	FPN		
	15	Ishikawa	K	FPN		
	1	Fukui	K	FPN		
	3	Shizuoka	K	FPN		
	2	Mie	K	FPN		
	2	Kyoto	K	FPN		
	5	Wakayama	K	FPN		
	4	Shimane	K	FPN		
	4	Kochi	K	FPN		
	8	Nagasaki	K	FPN		
	4	Miyazaki	K	FPN		
	1	Kagoshima	K	FPN		
Fin whale	2	Iwate	K	FPN		
	2	Fukui	R	FPN		
	1	Wakayama	K	FPN		
Humpback whale	2	Wakayama	R	FPN		
North Pacific right whale	1	Wakayama	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	3	Hokkaido	FAJ
	1	Fukui	
Fin whale	1	Iwate	
	1	Ibaraki	
	1	Niigata	
	1	Nagasaki	
Humpback whale	3	Hokkaido	
	2	Iwate	
	3	Chiba	
	1	Ishikawa	
	1	Shizuoka	
	1	Hyogo	
	1	Kochi	
	1	Miyazaki	
Sperm whale	3	Hokkaido	
	1	Aomori	
	2	Ibaraki	
	5	Chiba	
	2	Tokyo	
	1	Kanagawa	
	1	Niigata	
Unidentified large whale	1	Aomori	
	1	Iwate	
	1	Niigata	
	1	Wakayama	

7. Publications

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

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Takahashi, M., Matsuoka, K. and Hakamada, T., 2025. First large-scale abundance estimates of fin whales (*Balaenoptera physalus*) in the North Pacific: Implications for management. *Journal of Sea Research*, p. 102647, DOI: 10.1016/j.sears.2025.102647.

Tatsuyama, K., Kuroda, M., Minami, K., Shirakawa, H., Tamura, T., Zhu, Y. and Miyashita, K. 2025. Proposal of discrimination criteria using acoustic observation data of Japanese sand lance *Ammodytes personatus* in Sendai Bay. *Fish Sci*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12562-025-01888-0

Ten, S., Poli, F.F., Konishi, K., Pastene. L.A., Martín, V., Raga, J.A. and Aznar, F.J. 2025. The epibiont *Xenobalanus globicipitis* indicates differences in swimming kinematics among cetaceans. *Mar Biol*. 172: 7. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00227-024-04555-7

Yanai, R., Yasunaga, G., Tsuji, S., Honda, T., Iwata, A., Miyagawa, E., Yoshida, K., Kishimoto, M., Sakai, H., Fujise, Y., Asagiri, M. and Mitamura, Y. 2025. Dietary intake of whale oil–containing ω- 3 long- chain polyunsaturated fatty acids attenuates choroidal neovascularization in mice. *The FASEB Journal*. 39: e70378. doi:10.1096/fj.202402041R