

The Japanese Government's position on whaling

There are more than 80 species of cetaceans in the world. While some are endangered, some are overabundant. The Japanese Government strongly supports the protection of endangered whale species such as Blue whales.

On the other hand, the Japanese Government requests that the international community recognise that:

1. stocks of certain whale species such as Minke whales are scientifically proven to be not endangered.
2. the limited, sustainable use of such whale species does not pose any overall risk to stocks.
3. the Japanese government is strongly opposed to uncontrolled commercial whaling.

The purpose of the IWC

The purpose of the IWC (International Whaling Commission) is to provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry. However in the 1980s, the admission of non-whaling countries that advocated an anti-whaling campaign increased rapidly under the influence of environmental pressure groups. A temporary moratorium on commercial whaling was finally adopted in 1982.

The moratorium was introduced without advice from the IWC Scientific Committee as a result of pressure from anti-whaling countries that questioned the accuracy of the scientific data (e.g. natural mortality and recruitment etc.) then available concerning whale stocks.

Furthermore the moratorium included an agreement that:

This provision will be kept under review, based upon the best scientific advice, and by 1990 at the latest the Commission will undertake a comprehensive assessment of the effects of this decision on whale stocks and consider modification of this provision and the establishment of other catch limits.

The IWC Scientific Committee agreed in 1990 that there were 760,000 Minke whales in the Antarctic Ocean as a result of a comprehensive evaluation of Minke whale resources. Further, in 1992, they calculated that an annual catch of two thousand to four thousand

Antarctic Minke whales for one hundred years would not adversely affect the stock if calculated in accordance with the Revised Management Procedure (RMP*).

Unfortunately, this agreement has been continually rubbished by the anti-whaling countries.

The purpose of the scientific research carried out by the Japanese Government is to remove the element of "uncertainty surrounding the scientific data then available", i.e. the reason for the temporary moratorium on whaling being imposed.

Doing this would allow commercial whaling to be carried out in a sustainable manner, guided by accurate scientific data.

Through research whaling, the Japanese Government conducts continuous studies to accurately assess whale numbers and the state of their ecosystem. On the basis of the data collected, the Japanese Government makes concerted efforts to obtain the understanding of the anti-whaling nations by demonstrating scientific proof that commercial whaling of certain species would not have a negative effect on those species as a whole.

But a portion of committed anti-whaling nations declare that regardless of the level of whale stocks, they are opposed to whaling.

In view of these circumstances, the Norwegian Government raised an objection to the moratorium and commenced commercial whaling. The Government of Iceland, a pro-whaling nation withdrew from IWC (rejoining in 2003), and the Canadian and Philippines Governments also withdrew.

In 1982, the Japanese Government also raised an objection to the moratorium similar to the Norwegian Government, but the Japanese Government finally withdrew its objection to the moratorium, and ceased commercial whaling.

The Japanese government takes the position that Japan must not withdraw from the IWC. This is because the Japanese government wants to try to obtain understanding from both anti-whaling & non-whaling nations. Japan seeks understanding for the fact that:

1. whales are an international marine resource.
2. carefully regulated utilisation of whales which is done on a scientific, sustainable basis will not have an negative overall effect on whale stocks.

* In the RMP, moderate catch quotas are calculated for small “sub-areas” that have been set down, corresponding to each whale stock, in consideration of various risks to the resources.

The cultural relationship between whales and the Japanese

There has long been a deep relationship between the Japanese and whales. Artefacts from the Stone Age, traditional arts, gravestones and monuments all point to the importance of the whale in Japanese society. In Japanese culture, the entirety of a whale carcass is put to use with little waste, including use of the whale’s skin and internal organs. Through Japanese food culture, art and literature, folk festivals and faith the importance of the whale in Japanese culture is more clearly understood.

Food culture

Around AD 676, the spread of Buddhism in Japan brought with it warnings against eating the meat of cows, poultry, wild boars and other land animals. Similarly, the oldest historical book of Japan, the *Kojiki* (AD 712) warned against the consumption of land animals. In this way, greater dependency on marine resources as a food source, in particular whales, emerged in Japan.

In the Middle Ages, whales were referred to as “*Isana*,” meaning “brave fish.” According to the “*Shijohryu-Hohchousho*,” a famous cooking book from the Muromachi era (AD 1392-1573), whale was regarded as the finest item on a menu. The consumption of whale meat spread widely throughout Japan during the Edo era (AD 1600-1867). Every part of the whale was carefully prepared and eaten in various prefectures across the country.

Art and Literature

The oldest existing book of poetry in Japan, the “*Manyoshu*,” contains twelve haiku, (Japanese classical poems) which describe “Catching the brave fish”. In a classical novel of the Edo era, “*Toukaidohchu Hizakurige*,” two travellers express their enjoyment of whale meat. There are many descriptions of whale in cookbooks, for example in “*Geiniku-Choumikata*” of the Edo era. Countless other literary works, cooking books, colour woodblock prints, picture scrolls and poems give depictions of how the whale permeated Japanese culture.

Folk

Examples of folk festivals and various forms of entertainment pertaining to whaling can be found to this day throughout Japan. The Ainu, native to the Hokkaido prefecture, perform whale dances while in Mie prefecture whaling vessels are worshiped. In Nagasaki every seven years the annual festival is broadened to become the “Nagasaki-kunchi” festival. A paper-mache model of a whale, the “kujira-shiofuki” is constructed to honour and revere the giant fish. Through these festivals, whales are thought to bring richness and happiness to the Japanese. They are a symbol of good luck and protection against danger.

Another example of whale use in the Arts, was in classical Japanese puppetry, known as “*ningyo-johruri*.” Baleen, or whalebone as it is more commonly referred to, was traditionally used in this Japanese puppetry. The soft elasticity of the baleen created lifelike, smooth puppetry movement. Today, the stocks of baleen have been exhausted and necessary repairs to the puppets cannot take place. Without these baleen supplies, the art form of puppetry, which has been in existence since the 16th century, cannot continue in Japan.

Faith

An old Japanese proverb states, “*Seven bays benefit from just one whale*,” illustrating that whaling brought great benefits to vast areas. Annual memorial services commemorating the soul of the whale were performed, graves and pagodas were created and death registries were set up across Japan in Buddhist temples. Today there remains a belief that every animal’s soul holds great value. Through such rituals, the Japanese recognise and respect the fact that the survival of our human race is dependant upon all animals.

The number of whales in the Antarctic Ocean

The IWC Scientific Committee agreed in 1990 that there were 760,000 Minke whales in the Antarctic Ocean. Further, in 1992, the IWC Scientific Committee calculated that an annual take of two thousand Antarctic Minke whales for one hundred years would not adversely affect stocks.

It is said that the number of Blue whales decreased from 200,000 to just a few hundred due to excessive, unregulated whaling activities in the Antarctic Ocean that began at the turn of the 20th century.

On the other hand, the JARPA I research program established that numbers of the prolific Minke whale have increased 9.5 times over the past century. Near the Antarctic

ice edge, there is direct competition for food where minke whales, blue whales, crabeater seals and penguins all eat krill (*Euphausia superba*).

The capture of Blue whales has been prohibited for over 40 years, but the stocks have not yet recovered (The IWC estimates the current Blue whale population at 1,260).

Estimated Whale Populations

Minke whales	761,000 (Antarctic Ocean)*
Fin whales	31,000 (Indian Ocean Group in Southern Hemisphere)
	16,000 (Western Pacific Ocean Group in Southern Hemisphere)
Humpback whales	31,800 (Western Australia Group)
	3,728 (Eastern Australia Group)

* The IWC Scientific Committee is doing preliminary calculations as to the latest estimated populations of Minke whales in the Antarctic Ocean.

World heritage and Japanese small-scale whaling

The ongoing world heritage issue of preserving whaling cultures and traditions, and the hardship faced by traditional whaling communities in countries like Japan, Norway and Iceland.

Even today, people are engaged in whaling in various parts of the world. This is not the kind of whaling that was formerly conducted for the sole purpose of obtaining whale oil (machine oil, soap and so on) and which led to overhunting and wastage of resources. The small-scale whaling carried out today is sustainable whaling rooted in long tradition and distinctive cultures that make effective use of the entire whale for food and for other useful purposes. To reject this type of whaling, including that of Japan, without any scientific justification is denying the legitimate cultures and traditions of these people.

It was agreed at the 1991 meeting of the IWC Scientific Committee that the estimate of Minke whale stocks migrating to the Pacific coast of Japan is 25,000; and that stocks of this kind of whale are robust.

Ever since the moratorium on commercial whaling was established, the Japanese Government has repeatedly requested an interim relief allocation of 50 Minke whales annually in order to alleviate the hardships of traditional whaling communities such as Abashiri in Hokkaido, Ayukawahama in Miyagi, Wadaura in Chiba, Taiji in Wakayama, and so on. This request was obstructed, as it was faced with the unyielding opposition of

anti-whaling IWC member countries.

The second phase of Japan's whale research program under special permit in the Antarctic (JARPA II)

The temporary moratorium on commercial whaling was introduced on the basis that scientific evidence concerning whale stocks was inconclusive. Japan's scientific whaling research program (JARPA) was commenced in order to overcome this lack of scientific evidence by accumulating scientific data. A lot of data which is needed for the stock management of Antarctic minke whales was collected by this program, and the results of this program were highly thought of by IWC Scientific Committee.

The analysis of results from JARPA for 18 years concerning Antarctic minke whales shows that the composition of the Antarctic marine ecosystem is still changing. Based on the intention of achieving sustainable use of marine living resources, we need to understand where these changes are leading to, and study appropriate management methods and ways of utilization. New research is accordingly needed to explore the Antarctic marine ecosystem centring on Antarctic minke whales, and to develop a model that ensures the sustainability of all whales.

Details:

The JARPA II' catch number was computed as the statistical minimum sample number needed to find out maturity age, ratio of pregnancy and so on. The whale research program collects scientific data on more than 100 variables such as the age and the stomach contents of whales caught.

The following numbers indicate the intended JARPA II catch size:

Minke whales	850±10%
Fin whales	50 (10 in each of the first two years)
Hump-back whales	50 (None to be captured in the first two years)

It is important to note that both Humpback whales and Fin whales in the Antarctic Ocean are not on the brink of being endangered. Stocks are recovering rapidly, especially Humpback whales, stocks of which increase by 10% or more annually, a fact which the IWC Scientific Committee accepts.

In order to forecast whale populations, it is indispensable to gather various data including age, composition and gender. Using current science and technology, it is not

possible to accurately judge the age of Baleen whales without assessing the build up of cerumen (earwax) in the whales' ear canal, and it is not possible to judge the age of Toothed whales without examining the whales' teeth. Both cerumen and teeth can only be obtained by actually catching whales. Furthermore, the only method of accurately researching the impact whale overpopulation has on the commercial fishing industry, including questions of what, when, where and how whales eat, is to assess the stomach contents of whales. Because Minke whales in particular swim very quickly, it is impossible to do the research without actually catching the whale, while still ensuring the researcher's safety in the intense cold of the Antarctic Ocean.

Impact on whale watching

The IWC Scientific Committee agrees that humpback whales are increasing at approximately 10% per year. The small catches of humpback whales will have no impact on whale watching opportunities.

Whaling and whale watching are not mutually exclusive. In Japan, Norway and Iceland, both whale watching and whaling are accepted and these activities share the same goal of keeping healthy and abundant whale populations for their perpetual existence.

Japan's response to criticism over how by-products from the scientific research program are handled.

The by-products, including whale meat, that remain after the research is conducted are sold by the Japanese Government to the market in a fair manner under appropriate supervision.

This is because the Japanese Government adheres to Article VIII* of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling that stipulates that the by-products from research whaling must be used as far as practicable.

The revenue raised is used to offset research costs in accordance with the instructions of the Government.

* Article VIII, International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling

1. Notwithstanding anything contained in this Convention, any Contracting Government may grant to any of its nationals a special permit authorizing that national to kill, take, and treat whales for purposes of scientific research subject to such restrictions as to number and subject to such other conditions as the Contracting Government thinks fit, and the killing, taking, and treating of whales in accordance with the provisions of this Article shall be exempt from the

operation of this Convention. Each Contracting Government shall report at once to the Commission all such authorizations which it has granted. Each Contracting Government may at any time revoke any such special permit which it has granted.

2. Any whales taken under these special permits shall so far as practicable be processed and the proceeds shall be dealt with in accordance with the directions issued by the Government by which the permit was granted.

Criticisms of “Vote buying” against the Japanese Government

The expression ‘vote buying’ is a misrepresentation. The Japanese Government provides Official Development Assistance (ODA) to developing countries throughout the world irrespective of whether a country is ‘pro-whaling’ or ‘anti-whaling’. Japanese Government ODA goes to many anti-whaling nations, including Brazil and Argentina. Countries that have determined that their stance is ‘pro-whaling’ do so on the basis of their own beliefs supporting the sustainable utilisation of marine resources.

Moreover, it is common knowledge that such countries are regrettably subject to strong pressure by anti-whaling countries and environmentalists.

Needless to say, Japanese Government’s ODA for such countries is not provided for the purpose of their travelling expenses, nor as rewards for IWC annual meeting attendance, nor for the their government’s share of IWC expenses.

Competition between whales and fisheries

Research by Japan’s Whale Research Program in the Northwest Pacific has revealed that whales eat huge amounts of fisheries resources.

It is estimated that whales consume approximately three to five times as much marine resources as the world’s yearly marine fisheries production volume. (The exact amount varies depending on the yearly marine fisheries production output).

Besides eating Krill, which is also food for fish, whales eat a large amount of Anchovies, Mackerel, Sauries, Salmon, Squid and Walleye pollack. Furthermore, it has become clear that whales feast on certain types of fish during their most prolific season. Japan as a fishing nation cannot overlook this issue.

For further information on the issue of whaling please refer to the following websites;

Government/International Organizations

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/fishery/index.html>)

Fisheries Agency (<http://www.jfa.maff.go.jp/whale>)

International Whaling Commission (IWC) (<http://www.iwcoffice.org>)

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (<http://www.cites.org>)

Research Institutes

The Institute of Cetacean Research (<http://www.icrwhale.org/eng-index.htm>)

Related Websites

Japan Whaling Association (<http://www.whaling.jp/english/index.html>)

Japan Small-Type Whaling Association

(http://homepage2.nifty.com/jstwa/hp-eng/index_e.html)