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ANTARCTIC RESEARCH PROGRAM A SUCCESS

The Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR) said today the first cruise of its JARPA II program in the Antarctic was successfully conducted and all scientific objectives were met. The Antarctic research vessels arrived back in Japan at the weekend to a fanfare from supporters and the public.

Director General of the ICR Dr. Hiroshi Hatanaka said today that despite efforts by anti-science organizations Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd, the researchers were able to meet their objectives, including the sampling of minke and fin whales.

"Despite all claims from these people that their protests had prevented us from obtaining our research quota, the fact is that minke whales are so abundant that we achieved our target – a statistically necessary number of samples," Dr. Hatanaka said.

"In addition, we conducted a sighting survey with great success and found that humpback and fin whales have continuously increased with high reproduction rates. It is clearly demonstrated again that the biomass of humpback whales in the JARPA II research area is well beyond that of minke whales."

The research vessels surveyed whale stocks over a distance of 16,238.07 nautical miles. The total whales sampled were 853 Antarctic minke whales (462 males, 391 females) and 10 Antarctic fin whales (4 males, 6 females).

During the two and half month expedition in the Antarctic, scientists collected through non-lethal research photographic data of natural marks from 13 Blue whales, 34 Humpback whales and 38 Southern Right whales. Biopsy samples were collected from 13 Humpback whales, 15 Southern Right whales, nine Fin whales, five Blue whales and one Sei whale.

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