

## Taiji (Population: ~ 3,900)

The town of Taiji is widely known as the birthplace of Japanese large-scale whaling industry. Japan's whaling industry, as an industry, is believed to have begun 400 years ago, when the early coastal whalers organized to catch right and humpback whales off this part of the coast.

In 1606, WADA Yorimoto, a man from a powerful local family, invented a whaling method that used hand-held harpoons. In 1675, his grandson Yoriharu developed a whaling method that used nets. This method for hunting whales, using both harpoon and nets, spread to other parts of Japan's Pacific coast and had a great impact on whaling elsewhere in Japan.

But in December 1878, the whaling industry in Taiji suffered great losses, both people and vessels, during a violent storm. Despite this, however, the strong bond that had grown over nearly 300 years until then between Taiji and whaling was never broken.

Once Japan's whaling industry began modern whaling (in the early 1900s, when Japanese whalers began using the Norwegian method), a large number of whalers from Taiji moved to other whaling stations elsewhere in eastern Japan or joined whaling expeditions to the Antarctic. By doing so, they

contributed significantly to spreading traditional whaling culture throughout Japan. Taiji whalers used small-type whaling vessels to hunt pilot and other whales in their coastal waters as well as minke whales in the northern seas.

Whaling was Taiji's most important industry; it is the main foundation for the town's history and culture. During the peak years of whaling, the town's resident taxes from those involved in whaling accounted for 80% of the town's revenue. Today, ISONE Iwao and the Taiji Fisheries Cooperative Association engage in small-type coastal whaling and catch southern-form short-finned pilot whales (the quota is 50 for Wada and Taiji combined) and 20 Risso's dolphins annually.



Small-Type Whaling Vessel "Katsumaru" (ISONE Iwao, 1987)

## Wada (Population: ~ 6,000)

Since 1612, whalers have hunted Baird's beaked whales in Minami Boso, the southern part of Chiba Prefecture. This community has utilized this particular cetacean species as an important part of their culture. For example, *tare*, a seasoned and semi-dried Baird's beaked whale meat, is a local speciality that community members enjoy as part of their traditional diet.

The whaling base was first built in Katsuyama (now Kyonan-cho) at the entrance of Tokyo Bay, but it was moved, first, to Tateyama, then to Shirahama, next to Chikura, and finally to Wada, spreading whaling culture throughout the Minami Boso region. In this way, the 400-hundred year history and culture of whaling of Baird's beaked whales lives on today.

Small-type whaling opera-



Research activities on Baird's beaked whales

tions based in Wada began in 1948. Until 1987, Wada also had a large-type coastal whaling station from which vessels hunted for sperm and Bryde's whales. Today, Gaibo Hogeï engages in small-type whaling. The whalers are only able to take 26 Baird's beaked whales and a number of southern-form short-finned pilot whales (the quota is 50 for Wada and Taiji combined) off the shores of Wada.

## Abashiri (Population: ~ 42,000)

The history of whaling in Abashiri goes back to a time when Okhotsk people utilized cetaceans. The Okhotsk Culture evolved during the 5th to 13th centuries in regions that included the Rebun Island off the eastern coast of Hokkaido and Nemuro. These people's livelihoods depended primarily on fishing and hunting for marine mammals.

That Okhotsk people engaged in whaling has been proven conclusively by archaeologists' discovery, in the shell middens of Nemuro's Bente Island, of tools depicting small whaling boats using harpoons to hunt whales. Likewise, numerous whale bone artifacts believed to date from Okhotsk Culture period were found in the Moyoro midden in Abashiri as well. Later, the Ainu people also engaged in whaling in various parts of Hokkaido. During the Edo Period, the feudal government tried to develop whaling in Hokkaido using nets.

During the modern era, following the adoption of the Norwegian method of whaling, a large-type coastal whaling station was built in Abashiri in 1915. After World War II, to alleviate the food shortage in Japan, whaling was conducted all around the coast of Hokkaido, and modern small-type coastal whaling also began in Abashiri. Many of the whalers were originally from the older whaling communities in western Japan, and as they settled here, they helped pass on Japan's long history of whaling culture and tradition in Abashiri.

But because of IWC decisions, the catch quotas for whales gradually fell, and commercial



Moyoro Shell Mound

whaling has been suspended. Most of the whaling bases in Hokkaido have closed down. However, Abashiri is still an active whaling community; there are two whaling operations there — Miyoshi Hogeï and Shimomichi Suisan, both waiting desperately for minke whaling to resume. Minke whales have always been and are now abundant in the Sea of Okhotsk, but Japanese small-type coastal whalers are not allowed to catch them because of the IWC moratorium. Miyoshi Hogeï and Shimomichi Suisan currently catch only two Baird's beaked whales a year in Abashiri to keep alive the whaling tradition that they inherited.

## Hakodate

Since 1999, small-type whalers have caught eight Baird's beaked whales from the Japan Sea each year.



Oshika-Cho Whale Festival

## Ayukawa

Ayukawa is part of Oshika-cho (population ~ 5,500), located on the tip of the Oshika Peninsula in Miyagi Prefecture. Ayukawa's history of whaling began in the latter part of the Edo Period when whalers first used nets to hunt whales.

Modern whaling began soon after with the introduction of the Norwegian method, and it was after a large-type coastal whaling base was built in 1906 that Ayukawa's whaling really took off. Many whalers moved to Ayukawa from older whaling communities in western Japan and settled down here, passing on their ancestors' occupation and Japan's older whaling traditions to subsequent generations of Ayukawa whalers.

The Ayukawa whalers hunted primarily the sperm whale in large-scale coastal whaling operations, but they also hunted minke whales in small-type coastal operations. The Sanriku shore was an excellent hunting ground for minke whales; it rivaled that of the Okhotsk Sea and the coast off Kushiro. Large numbers of minke whales were found in this part of the sea, and they continue to be there today.

The IWC moratorium, however, has suspended the hunting of even a single whale under its management, no matter how

abundant these are, thus preventing small-type coastal whalers from providing a stable supply of healthy minke whale meat to their community. The whalers are also suffering serious psychological hardship because the IWC moratorium — entirely unnecessarily in the case of minke whales — is denying them their traditional role of providing this culturally important food to their families and friends.

The town has suffered tremendously from the IWC moratorium: the population continues to drop sharply, and the town is aging rapidly. To restore balance in this small, remote community, it is essential and urgent that small-type whalers resume their traditional hunt for minke whales. Now, while they wait and hope for the IWC to lift its quite unnecessary moratorium on the abundant minkes, Toba Hogeï, Seiyo Gyogyo and Nihon Kinkai engage in much-reduced small-type coastal whaling. Twenty-six Baird's beaked whales and 50 northern-form short-finned pilot whales are landed in Ayukawa each year — a far cry from the small-type whalers' proud traditions as hunters and community providers.

**Japan's small-type coastal whalers have traditionally hunted whales sustainably, taking only abundant species under science-based management.**

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# Japanese Community-Based Minke Whaling



**For a long time, Japan's small-type coastal whalers hunted primarily minke whales. Before the International Whaling Commission imposed a blanket moratorium, Japanese whalers caught an average of 348 minke whales annually.**

**Despite the fact that minke whales are not endangered and face no possibility of extinction, Japan was forced to suspend hunting minke whales in 1988. Today, under quotas that the Government of Japan sets, small-type whalers can catch only 180 whales each year — a combination of Baird's beaked whales and pilot whales. They are not allowed to take any of the abundant minkes.**

**The Japanese small-type coastal whalers have continued to work hard to try to survive and to**

**continue at least limited operations while awaiting the resumption of minke whaling. Among the measures they have taken was to reduce the number of operating vessels from nine to five to cut production costs.**

**Minke whales have always been and continue to be abundant. Recently, the number of minke whales has increased substantially, leading coastal fishermen to complain that because these whales eat huge amounts of fish, the amount of fish fishermen can catch has been decreasing.**

**It is now 15 years since IWC suspended commercial whaling for minkes. But for the small-type whalers and their communities, and now for the fishermen too, the resumption of whaling for minke whales remains a desperate hope.**



# Going Around in Circles with the IWC: Is There an End in Sight?

In 1993, the IWC passed—and has several times reaffirmed—a **Resolution** that states that as a result of the IWC moratorium requiring the cessation of taking minke whales, Japanese whalers and their four whaling communities have suffered greatly in terms of employment and diet, accompanied by stress and local economic hardships. The **Resolution** also acknowledges the importance of **swiftly resolving and improving these circumstances. But instead IWC has simply postponed action—again and again!**

Despite high hopes after last year's **Resolution**, IWC once again rejected the request.

Japan submitted a plan that would establish a system to manage the quota once IWC approved an interim catch quota. IWC praised the plan as being a sound one—and then, yet **again!**—rejected the request for the quota itself, not surprisingly leading Japan to believe that the IWC's promises are hollow.

IWC once more rejected Japan's request for a quota. Instead, it decided to hold an intersession Workshop of experts—cultural anthropologists, scientists.

Workshop The Workshop reaffirmed the **Resolution** from the 45th IWC [1993] that IWC shall "**expeditiously work**" on this issue.

Despite recommendations from the Workshop, IWC again voted to reject a quota.

IWC rejected it again.



10th Request Voted down

1998 • 50th Muscat, Oman



11th Request Voted down

And again.

1999 • 51st St. George's, Grenada



12th Request Voted down

Again, IWC rejected it—but did again reaffirm the 45th IWC Resolution?!

2000 • 52nd Adelaide, Australia



13th Request Voted down

The result was exactly the same as the preceding year: IWC rejected Japan's quota request, but **again** reaffirmed the 45th IWC Resolution?!

2001 • 53rd London, UK



14th Request Voted down

2002 • 54th Shimonoseki, Japan



Isn't IWC just going around in circles?

Can Japan reach her goal this time?

Approved

Goal  
Minke Whale Quota

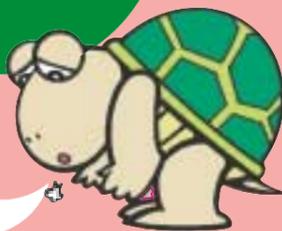


Now Japanese fishermen are complaining about the increased number of minke whales competing with fishermen for fish.

## How much longer before Japanese small-type whalers will again be able to take these obviously-abundant whales?!

### Start

The moratorium on commercial whaling came into effect in Japan, suspending the small-type whalers' traditional take of minke whales.



1st Request Deferred

1988 • 40th Auckland, NZ



2nd Request Deferred

1989 • 41st San Diego, US



3rd Request Voted down

1990 • 42nd Noordwijk, Netherlands



4th Request Voted down

1991 • 43rd Reykjavik, Iceland



5th Request Voted down

1992 • 44th Glasgow, UK



6th Request Voted down

1993 • 45th Kyoto, Japan



7th Request Voted down

1994 • 46th Puerto Vallarta, Mexico



8th Request Voted down

1995 • 47th Dublin, Ireland



9th Request Voted down

1996 • 48th Aberdeen, UK

1997 CBWWS Sendai, Japan

1997 • 49th Monte Carlo, Monaco

And again, Japan's request was rejected by vote.

Japan's request was rejected again this year. Instead, IWC unanimously adopted a **Resolution** saying it would act "**expeditiously**" on this request.

Again, a vote took place and, again, Japan's request was rejected.

Japan's request for a quota of 50 minke whales was voted on for the first time—and rejected.

Again, IWC made no decision, and Japan's request was postponed yet another year.

Japan requested of the IWC an interim quota for small-type whalers, but IWC made no decision, only postponing the discussion until the following year.

